No. 253 / MARCH 1994

THE NI
NEW INTERNATIONALIST

East Timor
The silence and the betrayal

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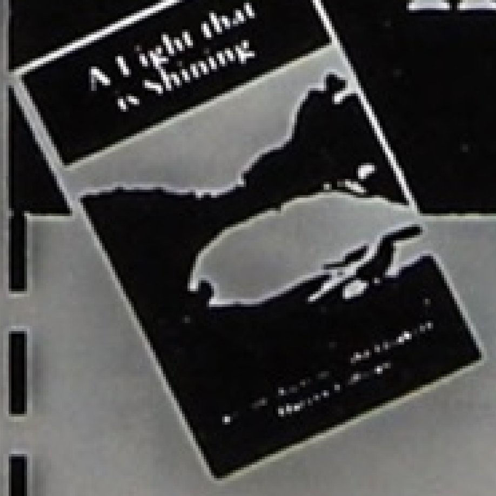

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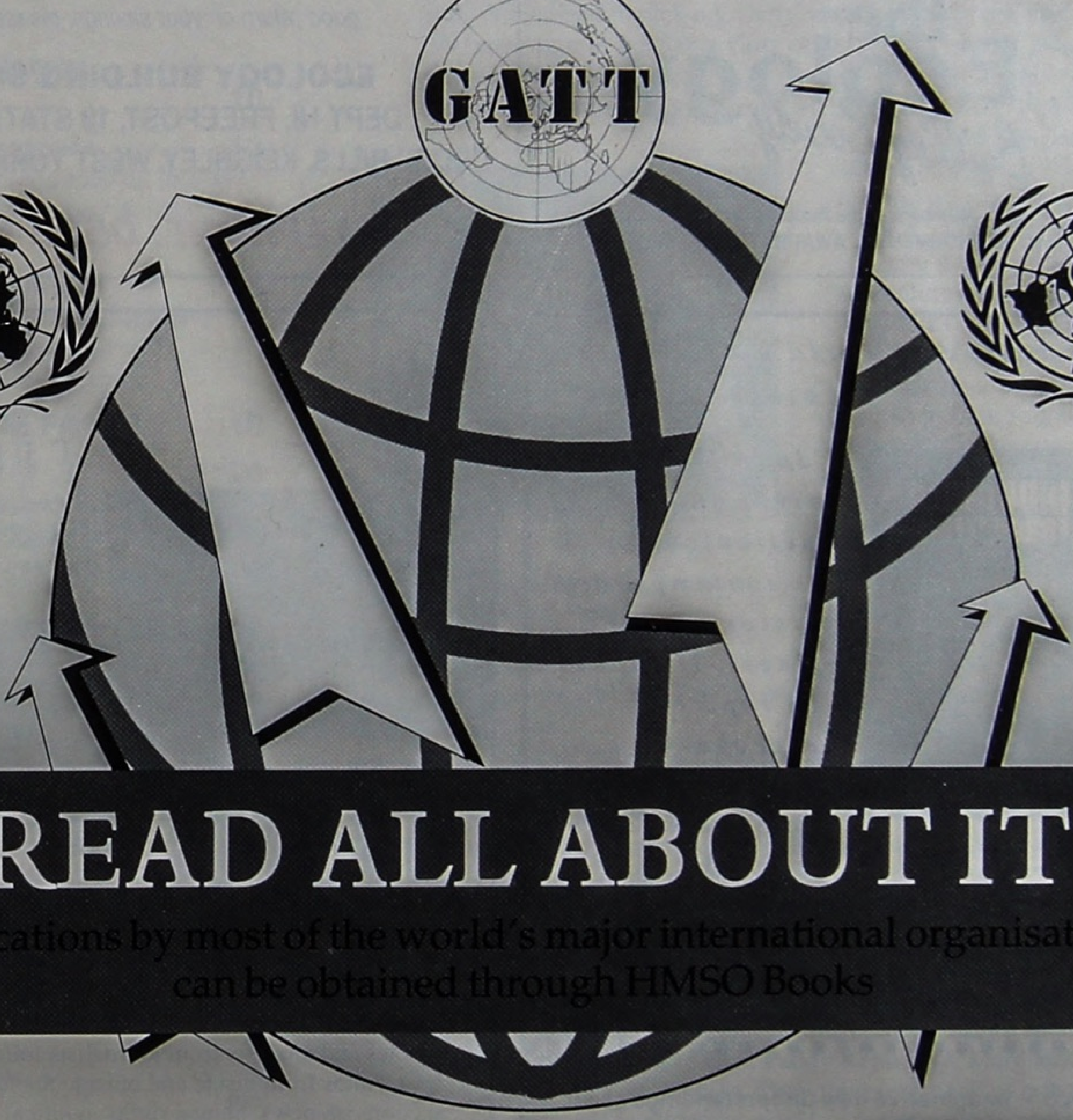

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH: YOUNG WOMAN SHOT DURING THE MASSACRE IN THE SANTA CRUZ CEMETERY, 12 NOVEMBER 1991, BY **STEVE COX**.
THE WOMAN WAS TRYING TO SHELTER FROM THE BULLETS INSIDE A SMALL CHAPEL WHICH OFFERED ALMOST NO PROTECTION.
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **ALAN HUGHES.**

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

East Timor

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

At Stanfords in London's Covent Garden, reputedly the best map shop in the world, I asked for a map of the island of Timor. 'Timor?' said a hesitant sales assistant. We crossed the floor and stood staring at shelves marked 'South East Asia'. 'Forgive me,' he said, 'where exactly is it?' 'Just north of Australia.' After a search all he could find was an aeronautical map with large blank areas stamped 'Relief Data Incomplete'. 'I have never been asked for Timor,' he said. 'Isn't that extraordinary?'

No, it isn't. East Timor is one of the world's great secrets. The Indonesian dictatorship, whose genocidal assault on the eastern half of the island has cost the lives of some 200,000 people, has done an excellent job of limiting international perceptions of its crime.

With this in mind, David Munro and I had long planned a documentary film. We wanted to pick up where Max Stahl's remarkable report of the 1991 massacre in the Santa Cruz cemetery had left off. But getting in, and out, would require enterprise. We pondered a number of eccentric subterfuges. Priests was one rejected early, followed by ornithologists, although we did acquire the latest volume of *Birds of Borneo, Java and Bali* and we can talk convincingly about Timor's 'curiously small parrot'.

DAVID MUNRO

Film maker David Munro and John Pilger in East Timor.

These were overtaken by 'Adventure Tours', a firm of 'travel consultants' for which a London travel agency provided us with documents that lauded our business acumen. David and I went first, followed by Ben Richards, a voluntary aid worker and cameraman Max Stahl. (Both Ben and Max are pseudonyms). We each carried a tiny Hi-8 video camera, which could operate from a concealed bag. We reckoned that perhaps two of us would be caught; but none of us was. Our videotape was sent out through the resistance network and carried out by David and myself, taped to our legs and crotches.

This special issue of the **NI** coincides with the showing of our Central Television film, *Death of a Nation:The Timor Conspiracy* on ITV in Britain on 22 February. It is, above all, a tribute to those in the Timorese resistance, inside and outside East Timor, who will one day set their country free. Alas, I can name only a few of them; the majority would be at risk.

So I thank warmly Jose Ramos Horta, Constancio Pinto, Abel Guterres, Jose and Fatima Gusmao, Ines Almeida, Cristiano da Costa, Jose Amorim Dias and Agio Pereira; also Carmel Budiardjo, Arnold Kohen, Shirley Shackleton, Gil Scrine, Noam Chomsky, Jim Dunn, John Taylor, Pat Walsh, Peter Carey, Michele Turner, Jill Jolliffe, Max Lane, Robert Domm, Mark Aarons, Max Stahl, Steve Cox, Paddy Kenneally, Margherita Tracanelli, Mark Curtis and Tom Hyland. They represent a roll of honour of hundreds who have refused to allow the world to forget entirely about a struggle for life and justice without parallel. Thanks also to my friends on the **NI**, especially David Ransom and Alan Hughes, who have published this issue with such dedication and flair.

John Pilger

John Pilger
*for the **New Internationalist** Co-operative*

One man's view

Imagine a serious news and comment medium whose entire content – facts and interpretation – were under the control of one man. Not too healthy, eh?

Yet the Mexico issue (**NI** 251) appears to be just that, even including most of the photography.

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST
Mexico
through the Tortilla Curtain

I have long enjoyed the balance that the **NI** has brought to my reading, but tempered my views with the knowledge that you start out with fairly firm and fixed opinions. However erudite, honest and thorough David Ransom may be, the credibility of the **NI** is seriously threatened by one person's total control of one subject.

Sandy Hedderwick
Leamington Spa, UK

No fairy tales

In his review of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (**NI 251**), Macdonald Daly seems to be disappointed not to find a simple clear resolution of human problems. To me this is like expecting a fairy-tale ending where some new idealistic socio-political system solves all the problems.

Perhaps cynicism is creeping up on me as I grow older, but the search for a perfect, flawless system, whether it be political, cultural or religious is, like the search for a perfect man or woman, certain of only one conclusion: disappointment.

If Macdonald Daly sees *Waiting for Godot* as trapped between the conservative and radical positions, this, to me, is not an adverse criticism. It is, I suspect, one of the concepts Beckett was trying to get across. Real life is full of unresolved ambiguities, but we ought to find this stimulating rather than a cause for despair.

If we can at least recognize some of them, then we may be less prone to being naively misled by the more simple-minded idealists and able to see the good that can be found in the imperfect.

Mike Fuller
Calderbridge, Cumbria, UK

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Myths and muddles

In an otherwise excellent issue on AIDS (**NI 250**), the page on the myths and theories surrounding the disease contained a confusing muddle of nonsense and half-truths.

It is highly plausible that HIV comes from the similar virus SIV found in monkeys. Talk of a 'missing link' is irrelevant and harks back to outdated pseudo-science which has unnecessarily confused the general public for many years. There is also no need to invoke 'bestial sex'; infections could occur, for example, when monkeys are kept for food or as pets.

Similarly, the connection between the emergence of HIV and mass vaccination is plausible. The phrase 'mutated from polio trial' is very misleading. The suggestion is that needles were not sterilized between repeated use, which could spread HIV in just the same way as it is spread among injecting drug-users.

David Balding
London, UK

Implicit agenda

The treatment in the AIDS issue (**NI 250**) took me into the minds and hearts of people the world over, increasing my awareness and empathy for those who suffer from the disease.

I was very disappointed, however, in the apparent lack of awareness of your own agenda in approaching the issue. This implicit agenda of 'sexual revolution' causes you to ignore and even ridicule one otherwise obvious way to significantly reduce the risk of contracting or passing on the disease; namely, having or at least trying to have, one lifetime sexual partner.

Dave Pankratz
Winnipeg, Canada

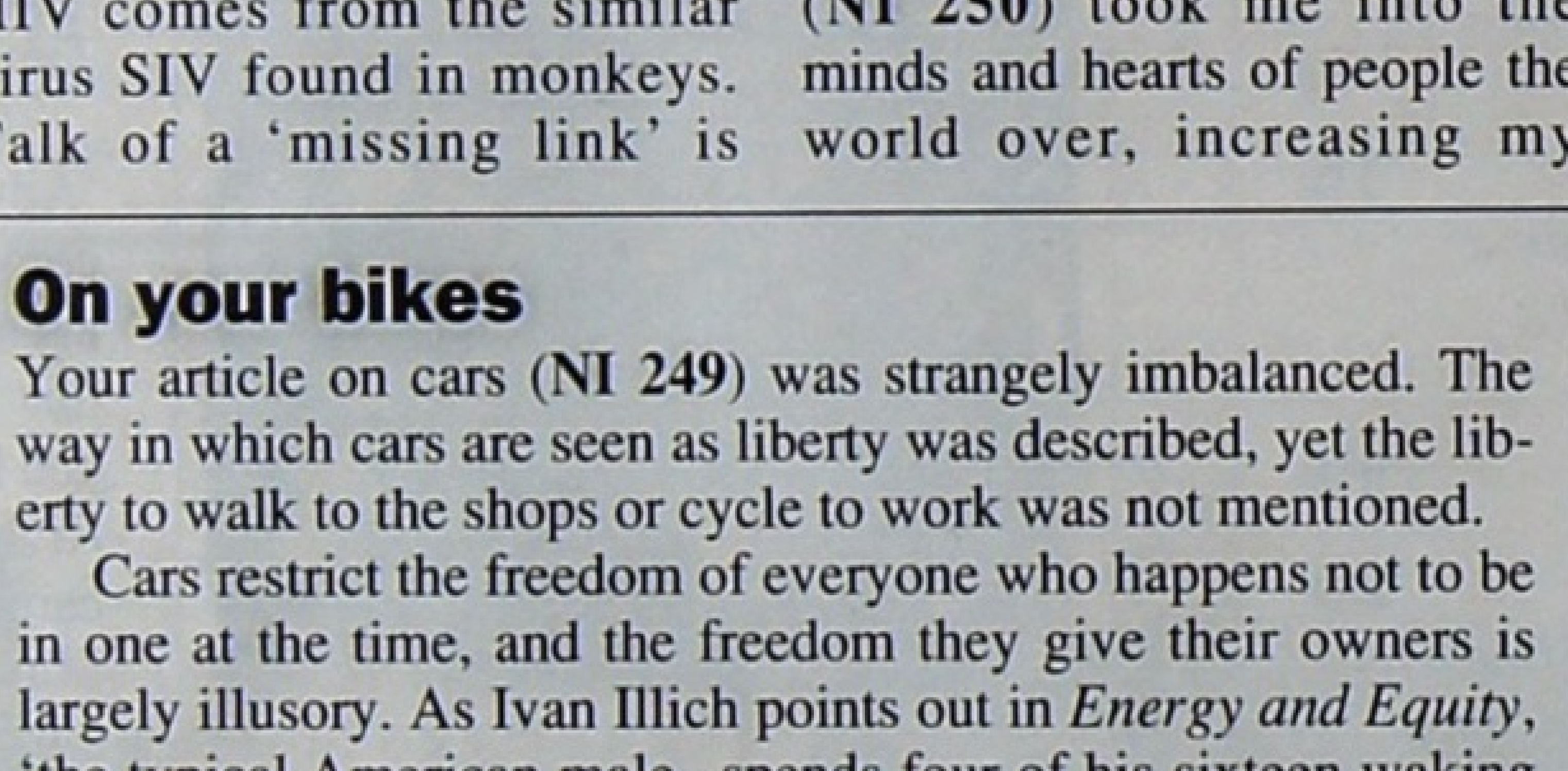
On your bikes

Your article on cars (**NI 249**) was strangely imbalanced. The way in which cars are seen as liberty was described, yet the liberty to walk to the shops or cycle to work was not mentioned.

Cars restrict the freedom of everyone who happens not to be in one at the time, and the freedom they give their owners is largely illusory. As Ivan Illich points out in *Energy and Equity*, 'the typical American male...spends four of his sixteen waking hours on the road or gathering his resources for it'.

In the last paragraph of the **NI** article the author asks: 'What if we were to take the same genius and wealth, the same vast human and material resources that we invest every day in the construction of armies and weapons of destruction, and apply them instead to the construction of the safest, most convenient, energy-efficient and environmentally-benign transportation system that humans have ever known?' Do we really not know the answer to this one? Can there really be someone writing for the **NI** who has never even heard of the bicycle?

Daithí Ó hÉalaithe
Co Átha Claith, Ireland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Massive gulf

With your magazine on Liberty (**NI 249**) you exposed the massive gulf that exists between sensible debates and demagoguery on this subject. It seems that you are on the latter side.

The article by Catherine Itzin uncritically supported Andrea Dworkin's lies and vilification. If this is an example of the scholarship of Ms Itzin then her research fellowship should be revoked.

Furthermore, your artist, Korky Paul, was surely a student of Dr Goebbels. Reducing Camille Paglia to a crude caricature (to quote Andrea Dworkin 'dehumanized as a sexual object...who enjoys humiliation' – or was the cartoon meant to be ironic?) accompanied by an out-of-context quotation was a piece of Nazi-like propaganda.

Eric Topp
Isabella Plains, Australia

Unwilling pupils

I read your edition on Education (**NI 248**) with interest. I thought I should add a few words to the current debate. I think too much is taught to mostly unwilling pupils. The basic subjects need to be taught, but with the opportunity for study at a later time when we become more self-motivated.

In other words, less time at school (which would probably help the unemployment registers), and expand resources for those in later life who are able or willing to educate themselves.

Jim Williams
Isle of Wight, UK

Real history

I felt that your contributors in the issue on History (**NI 247**) continually made the mistake of confusing contemporary happenings with real history. Where you put the dividing line is obviously a matter of debate, but a couple of generations is not enough to get rid of the bias that flavours all accounts of contemporary happenings. Real history gives us the opportunity to use the tool of comparison. How can we learn lessons from the rise and fall of countries, empires, religions and ethnic groups unless we have recourse to studies made from various sources and from different points of view?

Why didn't any of the articles re-affirm the truth that the majority of bad things that have happened comes from human greed, political ambition and religious intolerance whilst most of the good things come from human generosity, political altruism and religious fervour, and that we have a good deal of all within us?

Eric Dormer
Hayling Island, UK

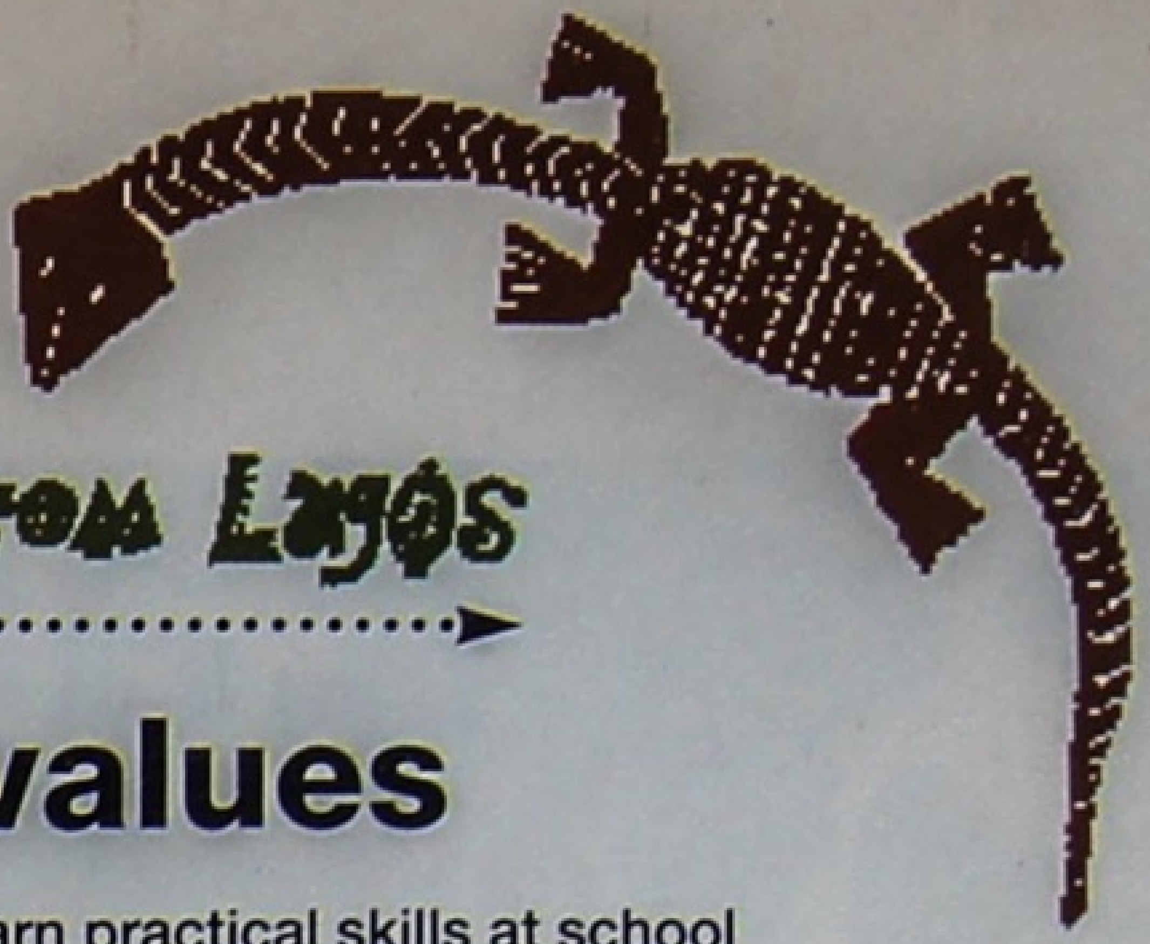
Owning up

The Multinationals magazine (**NI 246**) looked at one of the most serious issues confronting humanity – the attempt to establish a Hegelist, élitist, global economic control which requires the subjugation of all people and the loss of existing national sovereignty. There was one major omission: the asking of the question: 'Who owns and controls the multinational corporations?'

The answer to this opens up the secret world of the international banking system without consideration of which very little sense can be made of many of the events in the world today – the oil crisis of the 1970s, the Gulf War, the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union, the sale of national assets to foreign owners, the assassination of President Kennedy – to name just a few.

Neville Pearce
Napier, Aotearoa/New Zealand

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.



Letter from Lagos

Siren values

The only children in Nigeria who learn practical skills at school are the ones who don't need them. **Elizabeth Obadina** reports from a traffic jam.

'Would you believe it Mum? Mum! Listen now! It just blew up!'

At last Nike, my thirteen-year-old daughter, has my undivided attention. I stop trying to force my way into the unending stream of traffic at the crowded junction by her school and park by the roadside to wait for the road to clear.

'What blew up, Nixie?' I ask.

'Don't call me Nixie! And Muuuuu-um how can you stop just here? What an embarrassment! Please I beg you, don't TALK to ANYONE! I'm going to DIE! Please Mum, MOVE!' Nike is cringing in the back seat willing the earth to crack open and swallow her up. Even her much less sensitive 12-year-old brother Jide shows concern.

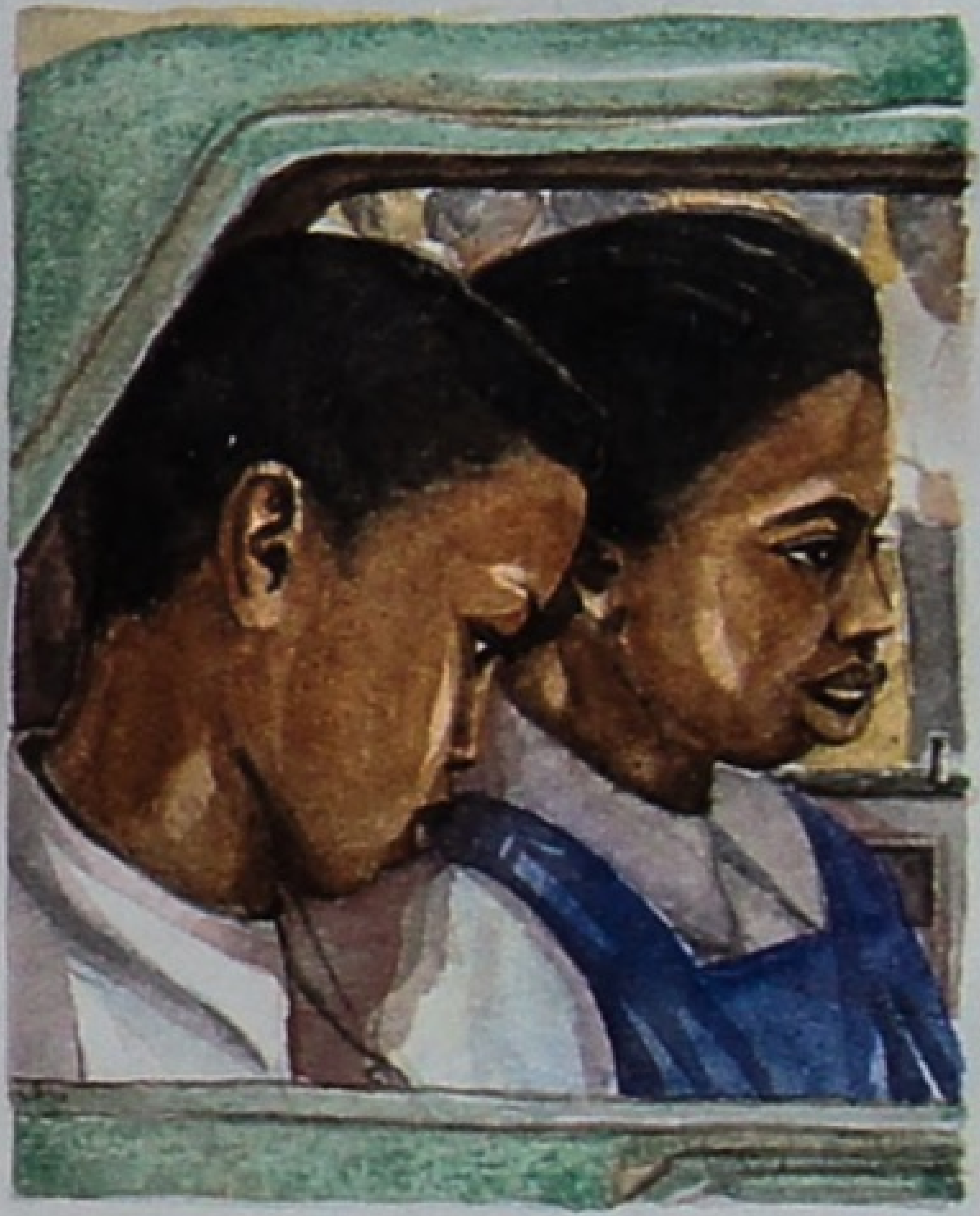


ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM McCURDY

'Look Mum, the 'yellow fever' is sorting out the jam. Let's try to get out,' he pleads.

Obligingly I start up the car and nudge my way forward. I set all my flashers flashing, a signal to the orange-shirted traffic warden – the 'yellow fever' – that I want to go straight across the junction and not turn right into the heart of the traffic chaos. Helpfully he forces a Mercedes to back up and a BMW to shift forward and ever so carefully I squeeze between their gleaming bumpers through to the empty road ahead.

'Thank you,' I call to the saluting 'yellow fever' before accelerating away with a tractor-like roar and a clatter of dangling exhaust pipe.

'I'm dead,' moans a little voice from the back seat.

'What blew up, Nix?' I return to her first concern. 'Have you been hurt?' I strain into the rear view mirror to see if I have missed evidence of a terrible injury. She seems intact.

'I'm destroyed! When are you going to get a new car? This one's beyond a joke. I've never been so EMBARRASSED.'

Ah, my poor rust-ravaged, much-dented, hardy little 1979 Toyota is going to be verbally savaged again. It's just one of many equally decrepit old wrecks out on the highways of Lagos. But there is a better class of traffic jam around Nike and Jide's school. Most pupils are picked up by their parents' drivers and most parents are 'made-it' politicians, bankers and sundry professionals. Army 'made-its' have their own military schools. There is no kudos at all to be had from being collected by one's mother in a jalopy.

'Most children in this country have to walk to school. You are both lucky...' I stop my well-rehearsed diatribe as I catch sight of Jide sawing away at an imaginary violin. 'So what blew up?' I ask yet again.

'My technology project,' wails Nike.

'What? A bookshelf?' I am puzzled.

'No! No! No! We're not doing carpentry anymore. I told you ages ago. It's my SIREN that blew up. We all have to know how to build a siren, and mine blew up when I switched it on, and now I have to go to school on Saturday and start again.' Nike is fuming.

On the list of skills important for survival in Nigeria, teaching teenagers from the country's élite how to build their own siren is probably one of the more important.

Anyone who is anyone – or any bank clerk shifting cash between banks – is accompanied on their way by official cars with sirens blaring and policemen hanging out of car windows thrashing motorists who don't move aside quickly enough with a *koboko*, a form of cat o' nine tails.

What other practical skills could wealthy teenagers learn? My mind leaps to laundering. My first 'laundering' thought was prompted by the acres of crisply-starched robes worn by both men and women of substance which get changed at least twice daily and more on special occasions when one changes for every stage of a social function.

Laundering of the other variety might also be a useful skill to learn. Nigeria must be the only country where the disgraced Bank of Credit and Commerce International, BCCI, continues to flourish under a changed name.

But let me not pillory my poor children's school. Ironically I sent them there precisely so that they would experience a full curriculum, especially the practical aspects dropped from the overcrowded, underfunded state school curricula. In addition to siren-making, my children have hoed up a productive little farm, learnt chicken- and rabbit-keeping, made concrete blocks, and learned a range of skills from cooking and cleaning using traditional methods to computer technology and *adire* cloth-dying.

The irony is that the Nigerian secondary curriculum, meant for all and emphasizing the vocational practical skills desperately needed for development, is only enjoyed by children of parents with enough money to pay for the better private schools. ■

Elizabeth Obadina is a freelance writer and journalist living in Lagos.

East Timor

A land of crosses

DAVID MUNRO

A great silence has accompanied the Indonesian occupation of East Timor. ***John Pilger*** *reports on the betrayal of a courageous people.*

CROSSES are almost everywhere in East Timor: great black crosses etched against the sky, crosses on peaks, crosses in tiers on hillsides, crosses at almost every bend of the road. They litter the earth and crowd the eye.

I had with me a hand-drawn map of where to find a mass grave where some of the murdered of the 1991 massacre in the Santa Cruz cemetery had been buried; I had no idea that so much of the country was a mass grave, marked by paths that end abruptly and fields inexplicably bulldozed, and earth inexplicably covered with tarmac; and by the legions of crosses that march all the way from Tata Mai Lau, the highest peak, 10,000 feet above sea level, down to Lake Tacitolu on its Calvary line of crosses that looks across to where the Pope said mass in 1989 in full view of a crescent of hard, salt sand beneath which lie countless human remains.

All the time David Munro and I were in East Timor we felt we were on borrowed time. We had only an aeronautical map, with blank spaces. The Indonesian military knew the roads and we didn't. At first, as our four-wheel drive vehicle edged along perilous roads, people seemed absent; but they were there. At the end of a long ravine was a village, from which people emerged slowly and with unsmiling, diffident expressions.

The village straddled the road, laid out like a military barracks with a parade ground and a police post at either end; and the inevitable crosses. It was a 'resettlement centre'. To the Timorese, these are little better than concentration camps. 'It is difficult to describe the darkness over us,' said Antonio (a pseudonym). 'Since the invasion, of fifteen in my immediate family, only three are left: myself, my mother and a brother who was shot. My village was the last Fretilin base to fall in 1979. The estimate is that our clan has been reduced from 5,000 to 500.

'Up until 1985 or 1986 most of the people were concentrated in what they called the "central control areas", in concentration camps. Only in the last three years have some of us been allowed to return home, but we can be moved again at any time. The Indonesians use spies everywhere; and certain things are not to be said, even within the family. People have to pretend that everything is okay. That is part of finding a way to survive. But a human body and mind have limitations. Once it boils over, people just come out and protest and say things which means they'll wake up dead the next day. I suppose you can compare us to animals. When animals are put in a cage they always try to escape. In human beings it's much worse. You must understand that for us who live here, it's hell.'

STEVE COX

Pretence on parade: Timorese must turn out with Indonesian troops to show a false face of harmony to the world.

A silence has enveloped East Timor since the Indonesian invasion in December 1975. The basic facts ought to be well known, but they are not. As a direct result of the invasion some 200,000 people, or a third of the population, have died. This estimate was made in 1983 by the head of the Roman Catholic Church in East Timor. What in other countries would be condemned as a crime against humanity has, it seems, been quietly deemed acceptable.

Proportionately, not even Pol Pot in Cambodia killed as many people; yet Western intelligence has documented the unfolding of the genocide since the first Indonesian paratroopers landed in the capital, Dili, on 7 November 1975 – less than two months after two Australian television crews were murdered by Indonesian troops, leaving just one foreign reporter, Roger East, to witness the invasion. He became the sixth journalist to die, shot through the head with his hands tied behind his back and his body thrown into the sea. Thus, in the age of television hardly a single image or a reported word reached the outside world. There was just one radio voice, picked up in Darwin, 300 miles to the south, rising and falling in the static. 'The soldiers are killing indiscriminately,' it said. 'Women and children are being shot in the streets. We are all going to be killed... This is an appeal for international help. This is an SOS. We appeal to the Australian people. Please help us... '

No help came. Tens of thousands of people died just resisting the invasion. 'I was the CIA desk officer in Jakarta at that time,' Philip Liechty told me, 'I saw the intelligence that came from firm sources. There were people being herded into school buildings by Indonesian soldiers and the buildings set on fire; anyone trying to get out was shot. There were people herded into fields and machine-gunned. We knew the place was a free-fire zone. None of that got out.'

There was little verifiable news for two years. In 1977 two nuns in Lisbon received a letter from a priest in hiding in East Timor. 'The invaders,' he wrote, 'have intensified their attacks. The bombers do not stop all day. Hundreds die every day. The bodies of the victims become food for carnivorous birds. Villages have been completely destroyed. The barbarities, understandable in the Middle Ages, justifiable in the Stone Age, all the organized evil, have spread deep roots in Timor. The terror of arbitrary imprisonment is our daily bread. I am on the *persona non grata* list and any day I could disappear. Genocide will come soon...'

On 12 November 1991 a brave British cameraman, Max Stahl (a pseudonym) videotaped Indonesian troops murdering a crowd of young people in the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili. This broke the silence. Some, like Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans, one of the Indonesian regime's most reliable friends, sought to explain away the massacre – which had left 528 people dead and 'disappeared' – as an 'aberration'. But such apologetics were undermined by the reaction of Indonesia's senior military officer who said he wished to 'wipe out' more 'delinquents', and by international revulsion at the visual evidence of wounded, helpless people dying among the gravestones.

The history of East Timor is very different from that of the other islands that make up the volcanic stepping stones, rising from clear deep seas, east of Bali. The Suharto regime has tried to justify its illegal occupation on the grounds of what it calls 'deeply felt and long-standing ties... of common brotherhood'. In fact, the East Timorese have little in common with Indonesia and especially the Javanese who rule it. Whereas most Indonesians are Muslims, Hindu or Buddhist, the East Timorese are animist or Catholic. Even their colonial experience was different, with the Portuguese 'Latinizing' the eastern half of the island and insulating it from the upheavals of the Dutch colonies, including West Timor, that became Indonesia in 1949.

Portuguese rule was benign, neglectful and, as in other Portuguese colonies, multiracial. Not even the Catholic Church, it seems, resorted to forced conversion, which perhaps explains why Christian and animist beliefs and prejudices coexist with harmony. However, the Church, as elsewhere, ran the schools and created an élite indebted to its liturgy of power. This changed dramatically with the Indonesian invasion. An East Timorese church emerged which represented a direct challenge to the Indonesian occupation. Thus, the Church became, as the historian Peter Carey has written, 'the only institution

PENNY TWEEDIE

Timorese refugees flee in fear. This is one of a series of striking photographs taken by Penny Tweedie as the invasion approached in 1975.

capable of communicating independently with the outside world and of articulating the pain of the East Timorese people'. In 1989 Bishop Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo, the head of the Catholic Church in East Timor, appealed directly to the world in a letter to the United Nations Secretary-General. 'We are dying as a people and as a Nation,' he wrote. He received no reply.

In April 1974 Portugal's old fascist order was swept aside by the *Revoluçao dos Cravos*, the 'Carnation Revolution'. Events in Lisbon moved quickly and chaotically. The tiny 'overseas province' of East Timor, 'asleep at the end of the earth', as one Portuguese commentator later wrote, 'was on no-one's list of priorities'. However, within a month of the revolution in Lisbon two main political groups had formed in East Timor. The Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), led by members of the colonial administrative élite and coffee-plantation owners, called for federation with Portugal and eventually independence. The Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT), which later became the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, or Fretilin, comprised most of the younger nationalist opposition who wanted genuine economic reforms.

The Indonesian military dictatorship claimed that Fretilin would turn East Timor into a base for communist insurgency, which was absurd. Most of Fretilin's leaders were Catholic socialists who looked to the Cape Verde philosopher Amical Cabral and the Brazilian priest and educator Paulo Freire. Above all, they were nationalists who wanted their people to control their own destiny, trade and resources.

Many of Fretilin's leaders were the sons of Timorese who had saved the lives of Australian soldiers fighting the Japanese in Timor during the Second World War and were confident that their former allies would discharge their moral debt, especially now that the inspiring anti-colonialist Gough Whitlam was prime minister. His Labor Government would surely support the rights of the people of East Timor. Australia had been among the first to recognize the former Portuguese colony of Guinea-Bissau; and Whitlam's personal relationship with Suharto suggested that his views would be taken seriously in Jakarta.

What the Fretilin leaders could not possibly measure was the depth and complexity of post-war Australia's obsession with Indonesia. In September 1974 Gough Whitlam met Suharto in Java. According to journalists briefed by Australian officials, Whitlam and Suharto 'agreed that the best and most realistic future for Timor was association with Indonesia', and that Whitlam had made clear that 'an independent Timor would be an unviable state and a potential threat to the area'.

In October of that year a clutch of generals close to Suharto launched a secret intelligence operation, code-named *Operasi Komodo*, aimed at destroying the burgeoning independence movement. A coalition formed by Fretilin and the UDT was undermined by Indonesian provocateurs and collaborators, leading to a civil war that claimed some 1,500 lives. By September 1975 Indonesian special forces had infiltrated the country; and their discovery by two Australian television crews, near the town of Balibo, resulted in the murder of the six newsmen.

The official Australian attitude to Indonesia was expressed by the ambassador in Jakarta, Richard Woolcott, who in July of that year cabled Canberra: '[We should] leave events to take their course... and act in a way which would be designed to minimize the public impact in Australia and show private understanding to Indonesia of their problems... I know I am recommending a pragmatic rather than a principled stand but that is what national interest and foreign policy is all about.'

On 28 November 1975 Fretilin – which had won the civil war and a majority in local elections – declared unilateral independence before a cheering crowd in Dili. One week later President Gerald Ford and his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, arrived in Jakarta on a visit described by a State Department official as 'the big wink'. The invasion had been set down for 5 December; but the Americans demanded that the Indonesians wait until after the President had left; and on 7 December, as Air Force One climbed out of Indonesian airspace, the bloodbath began.

The inhabitants of Dili were subjected to what the historian John Taylor has described as 'systematic killing, gratuitous violence and primitive plunder'. At 2pm on 9 December, 59 men were brought on to the wharf at Dili harbour and shot one by one, with the crowd ordered to count. The victims were ordered to stand on the edge of the pier facing the sea, so that when they were shot their bodies fell into the water. Earlier in the day, women and children were executed in a similar way. An eyewitness reported: 'The Indonesians tore the crying children from their mothers and passed them back to the crowd. The women were shot one by one.'

As in Pol Pot's Cambodia, the first to die were often the educated – public officials, nurses, teachers – and minorities. The Chinese population was singled out. Five hundred were reportedly killed on the first day of the attack. An eye witness described how he and others were ordered to 'tie the bodies to iron poles, attach bricks and throw the bodies in the sea'. The killing of whole families and children, appeared to be systematic. An officer explained: 'When you clean the field, don't you kill all the snakes, the small and large alike?'

The UN General Assembly and Security Council passed a total of 10 resolutions calling on Indonesia to withdraw its troops 'without delay'. Unlike the UN's resolve against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, nothing happened. In a secret cable to Henry Kissinger, the US ambassador to the UN, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, boasted about the 'considerable progress' he had made in blocking UN action on East Timor. This, he explained, was part of 'a basic foreign policy goal, that of breaking up the massive blocs of nations, mostly new nations, which for so long had been arrayed against us in international forums'.

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, who had succeeded Whitlam, flew to Jakarta in October 1976 and gave the first public recognition of the Indonesian occupation. He said his Government 'acknowledged the merger' but 'only for purely humanitarian reasons'. Fraser was accompanied by the head of BHP, Australia's largest company. BHP had recently acquired a controlling share in the Woodside-Burmah company, which had been drilling for oil in the seabed off East Timor, said to contain one of the richest oil and gas fields in the world.

Western governments vied with each other to sympathize with 'Indonesia's problems' – and to sell Jakarta arms. In 1978, at the height of the massacres, British Foreign Secretary David Owen approved the sale of British Hawk ground attack aircraft. He said estimates of the killings in East Timor had been 'exaggerated'. Britain is today the biggest arms supplier to the Indonesian military; in 1993 British Aerospace agreed a $1,200 million deal for more Hawk aircraft. A succession of ministers has misinformed Parliament that the Hawks would not and could not be used in East Timor. There is plenty of eye-witness testimony to the contrary. Max Stahl, David Munro and I have interviewed people who have seen the distinctive Hawk's devastating effect on the civilian population.

We also have evidence that the Indonesians conducted a second massacre following the killings in the Santa Cruz cemetery in 1991. In our film, *Death of a Nation: The Timor Conspiracy*, witnesses tell how Indonesian soldiers systematically murdered the wounded.

In 1989 Gareth Evans, Australian Foreign Minister, and the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, toasted each other in champagne flying above the Timor Gap, having just signed a treaty that allowed Australian companies to drill for oil and gas. Professor Roger Clark, the world authority on international law at Rutgers University in the US, told me: 'It is acquiring stuff from a thief. If you acquire property from someone who stole it, you're a receiver.' Evans described the Indonesian enquiry into the Santa Cruz killings as 'positive and helpful' and 'very encouraging', adding that the victims unaccounted for 'might simply have gone bush'. Amnesty International dismissed the enquiry as lacking all credibility. On the day of Amnesty's condemnation further Timor Gap contracts were issued.

There have been some hopeful developments in the last year. An amendment to a Foreign Aid Bill before the US Congress calls on the President to 'consider' the human-rights situation in East Timor before approving arms sales to Indonesia. Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Commission has voted to condemn Jakarta over East Timor; Portugal is taking action at the World Court in the Hague over the legality of the Timor Gap Treaty; a similar action is before the Australian High Court.

Jose Ramos Horta, the special representative of the National Council of Maubere Resistance – East Timor's foreign minister in exile – has put forward an imaginative three-phased peace plan which would lead to a referendum on the country's future. 'Indonesia,' he said, 'should seize the olive branch we are offering'. Peter Carey says Portugal could play a key role just as Britain did in the decolonization of Zimbabwe in 1979 and 1980. 'The first step,' he said, 'should be the withdrawal of all Indonesian troops... For the Government of Indonesia, it must be made clear that international respectability will elude them until after the East Timor issue is resolved.'

By all accounts the Timorese resistance should have been wiped out years ago; but it lives on, as I found, in the hearts and eyes of almost everyone: eyes that reflect a defiance and courage of a kind I have not experienced anywhere else. Recent opposition has come vociferously from the young generation, raised during Indonesian rule. It is they who have kept alive a nationalism that combines a political entity with a spiritual love of country and language that Indonesian terror and bans have only strengthened. And they have been able to endure, it must be said, by the lifeline provided by an extraordinary network of solidarity groups and exiled Timorese around the world.

In 1989 a courageous Australian woman called Shirley Shackleton managed to get to Balibo, the Timorese town where the Indonesians murdered her husband, Greg, with the other television newsmen. She had wanted to plant a tree in Greg's memory. A priest offered the yard behind his church; and Shirley planted the sapling with Indonesian troops surrounding her. 'They had not allowed any Timorese to be there,' she said. 'But as I knelt, saying a few words to Greg, the most wonderful singing washed over me. On the other side of the road, a young people's choir had timed its practice to my being there. I shall never forget those beautiful voices. They came through the barrier the Indonesians had set between us, and they comforted me. They will never be defeated.' ■

STEVE COX

Resistance lives on in the hearts and eyes of the young in East Timor as they process to the Santa Cruz cemetary and bloody repression in 1991.

Shirley Shackleton: 'I shall never forget those beautiful voices'.

DAVID MUNRO

MICHAEL NICHOLS / MAGNUM

Culture of contempt

The military rulers who are trying to crush East Timor seized power in Indonesia in 1965 with a coup that cost 500,000 lives and put an end to a vibrant democracy in their own country. ***Max Lane*** *studies the historical record.*

A FREQUENT argument heard from the current Indonesian Government and from its defenders internationally is that it is inappropriate to judge its human-rights record using so-called Western values. But since the beginning of the twentieth century a fundamental aspect of Indonesian history has been the struggle for freedom and human rights.

At the beginning of the century the main struggle was against colonial oppression. Mass organizations – such as the *Sarekat Islam* (Islamic Union) – and later political parties – such as the Indonesian Communist Party, the Indonesian National Party and the Islamic Union Party – involved hundreds of thousands of people in their mass campaigns. Thousands of Indonesians, especially workers, entered colonial prisons as payment for the assertion of their rights.

The same vision inspired Indonesians to take up arms and support the guerrilla struggle between 1945 and 1949 against the return of the Dutch to Indonesia after the defeat of Japan at the end of World War Two. All of the mass political movements of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s fought for political democracy, individual freedom and justice. Between 1945 and 1959 Indonesia had one of the freest parliamentary democracies in the world. In 1955 there were general elections with well over 30 parties participating. In 1957 there were equally free and successful elections for provincial parliaments. These elections took place with a totally free and flourishing press. Indeed, many of Indonesia's prominent political and intellectual figures of the time were publishers or journalists.

During this time, hundreds of thousands of people joined the political party of their choice or various mass organizations affiliated to these parties. Very large trade union, peasant, women's and cultural organizations developed which were affiliated to or worked closely with each of the major parties. Even the smaller Protestant and Catholic parties had their own mass organizations. The trade unions were able to launch actions to take over all the companies that still belonged to the Dutch. By 1957 almost all of these companies had been occupied by their workers and were eventually nationalized.

There were, of course, problems associated with this freedom. Because there were five major parties with virtually equal popular support, there was some instability. But it did not result in any major economic disruption as four of the main parties shared a similar general outlook on the economy. Only the Communist Party, the fastest-growing party, with support amongst workers and peasants, was excluded from a turn in government.

The erosion of this liberal democratic system began with escalating sabotage by the Indonesian military. As early as 1952 the military, led by General Nasution, attempted a coup. Even more serious problems began in the late 1950s. Extreme rightist generals stationed in parts of Sumatra and the Celebes staged mutinies to protect their smuggling and business enterprises and to express their hostility to the Indonesian Left. In some areas there were mass arrests of leftists. This rebellion was crushed by the national military command.

Under the protection of martial law – declared because of the mutinies – the army moved into all nationalized Dutch companies and assumed control. This turned the army into the single biggest group of capitalists in the country. Their behaviour had an enormous impact on the Indonesian economy. Military managers began lining their pockets to such an extent that this modern sector of the economy went into rapid decline.

Then the military devised a new constitution to encourage President Sukarno, hitherto a figurehead President, to disband the elected Assembly. In 1959 President Sukarno began a campaign to replace the political parties with the various mass organizations as the main representative bodies.

This was the first serious undermining of political democracy in Indonesia. But even after that, mass participation in political life remained very high. Between 1959 and 1965 over 15 million people joined political parties or affiliated to mass organizations. Huge mass campaigns developed, usually under the ideological leadership of President Sukarno, around issues of American and British influence in the region as well as land reform and corruption. These campaigns grew in intensity as a struggle developed between the big mass parties of the left (the Indonesian Communist Party) and the mainly conservative Islamic forces (the military and its allies).

By 1965 the extent of voluntary political mobilization of the people was enormous. The military began to panic. In outlying provinces such as in Kalimantan they banned leftist publications. By late 1965 rumours began to spread of the existence of a Council of Generals planning a coup against Sukarno.

On 30 September a group of middle-ranking officers moved to arrest these generals. Chaos ensued. The remaining leadership of the military initiated a programme of mass murder and arrests. Over 500,000 people were killed and hundreds of thousands of others were arrested without trial. Almost 20,000 were gaoled for between 10 and 14 years. All the big mass organizations ceased activity. Left-wing organizations and parties were banned. A policy of *depolitisasi* (depoliticization) was introduced which forbade political activity, left or right, at small town and village level. Only the state was allowed access to the population.

It was only after 1965 with the new government of President Suharto, backed by the military, that the idea began to be propagated that political democracy was alien to Indonesian culture. The truth is that it is not Indonesian but military culture that is hostile to mass political participation. Between 1945 and 1965 millions of Indonesians voluntarily and frequently threw themselves into political activity by joining the political organizations of their choice, showing that they too, like all human beings given the chance, wish to participate in determining the life of their country. ■

Max Lane is a Research Associate at the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Sydney and a regular writer on Southeast Asian affairs for *Green Left Weekly*.

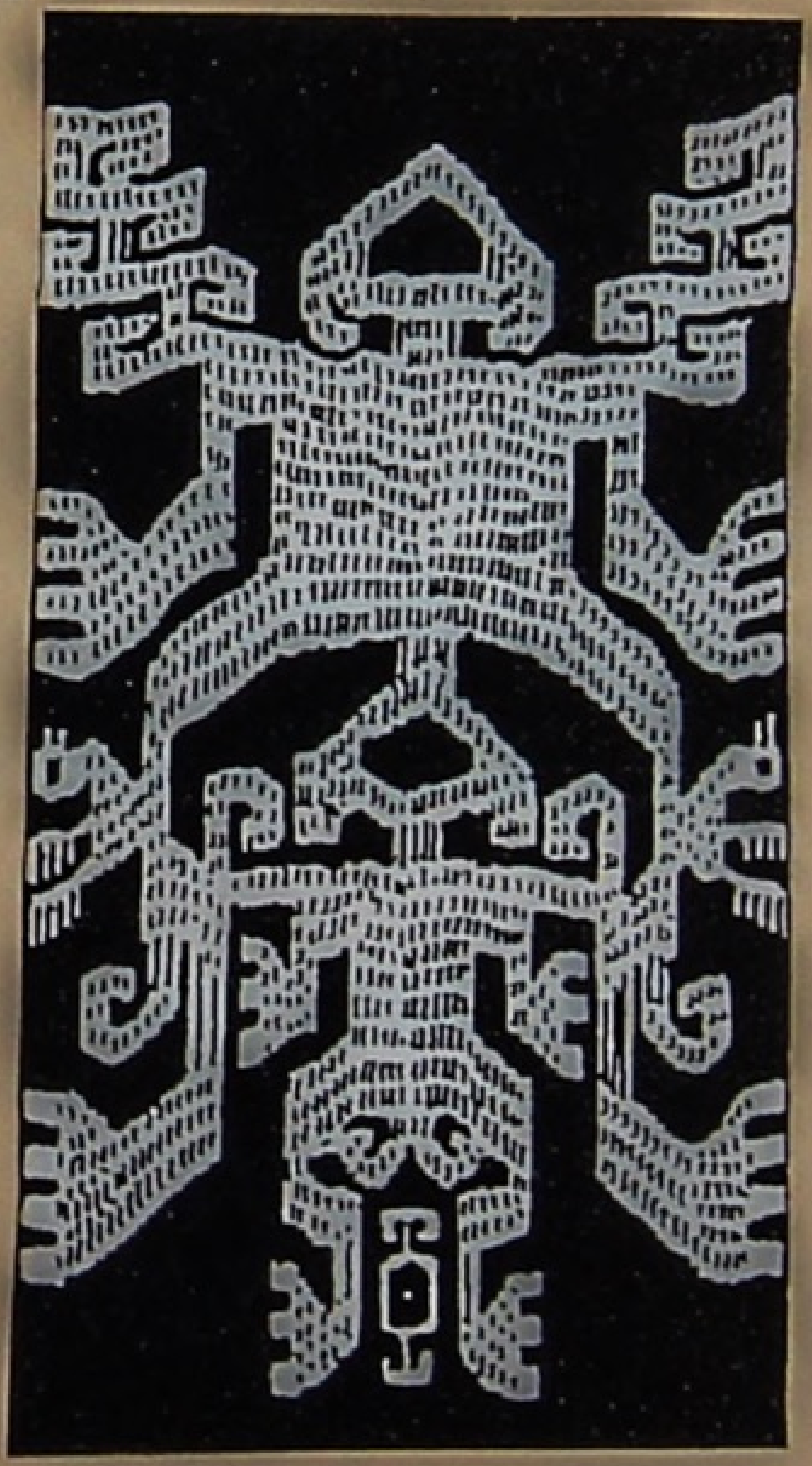
Timor came from the crocodile

An often-told traditional story

LONG ago a boy saw a baby crocodile fighting for his life while the sun was shining fiercely. He was trying to get from the lagoon to the sea, but the little crocodile wasn't strong and was moving very slowly. The boy took pity on him and carried that crocodile to the sea.

The crocodile was very grateful and promised that he would repay that kindness. He said if the boy wanted to travel he could go to the sea and call 'Crocodile, Crocodile', and he would come to him.

Time passed. The boy remembered the crocodile's promise. He went to the sea and after the third call the crocodile came. They were like two old friends meeting after a long time, very happy to see each other. The crocodile told the boy to sit on his back and took him on a journey. They travelled together like this many times.


The crocodile as portrayed in a traditional Timorese design.

Then one day the crocodile felt he would like to eat the boy. It was his instinct, being the animal he was. But his conscience troubled him and before he did this thing he went to ask the opinion of other animals. He met a whale, a tiger and a buffalo... many animals.

All of them condemned him, saying he shouldn't repay this favour of the boy with bad action. Finally he came to a monkey, the finest animal, jumping from one branch to another. For being so ungrateful he called the crocodile the worst name he could and then disappeared.

The crocodile was ashamed and gave up the idea of eating the boy. He still took the boy on his back and they travelled together until the crocodile became old. He said, 'Ah, friend, the good deed you did me cannot be repaid. I am obliged to die and I will change into a land where you and your descendants will live from my fat, as payment for your kindness.'

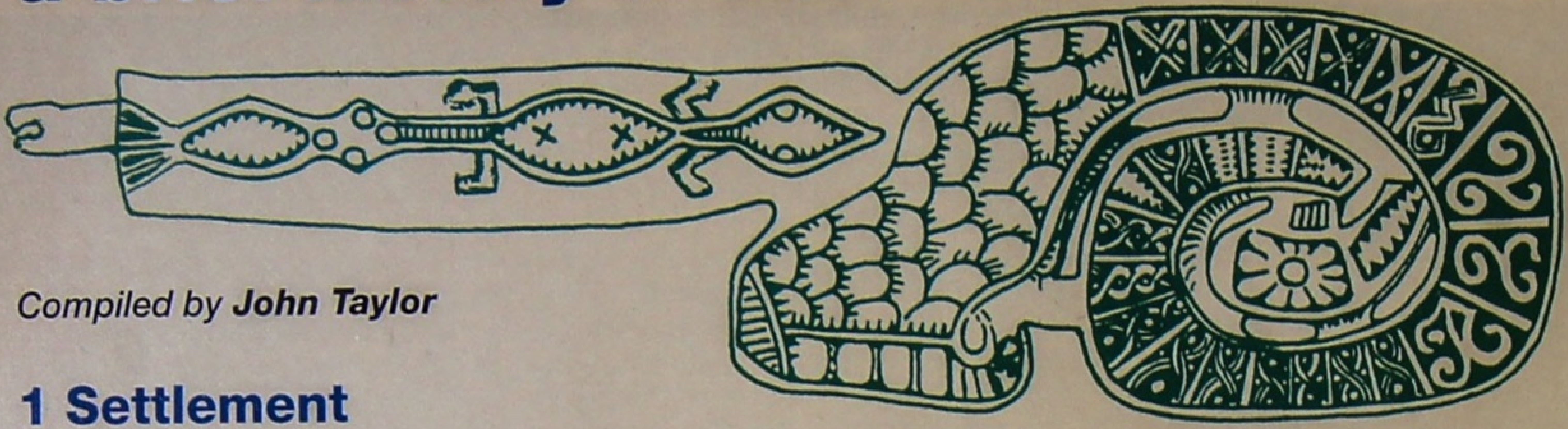
That crocodile became Timor island, which is the shape of a crocodile, and the Timorese are descendants of that boy. People there are always kind. They welcome others and have a sense of justice and gratitude to people and they tell this legend to explain it.

Our people call crocodiles 'Grandfather'. When they cross a river they always call 'Crocodile, I am your grandchild, do not eat me'. ■

From **Michele Turner**, *Telling - East Timor: Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*, New South Wales University Press, 1992.

Simply...

a brief history of East Timor



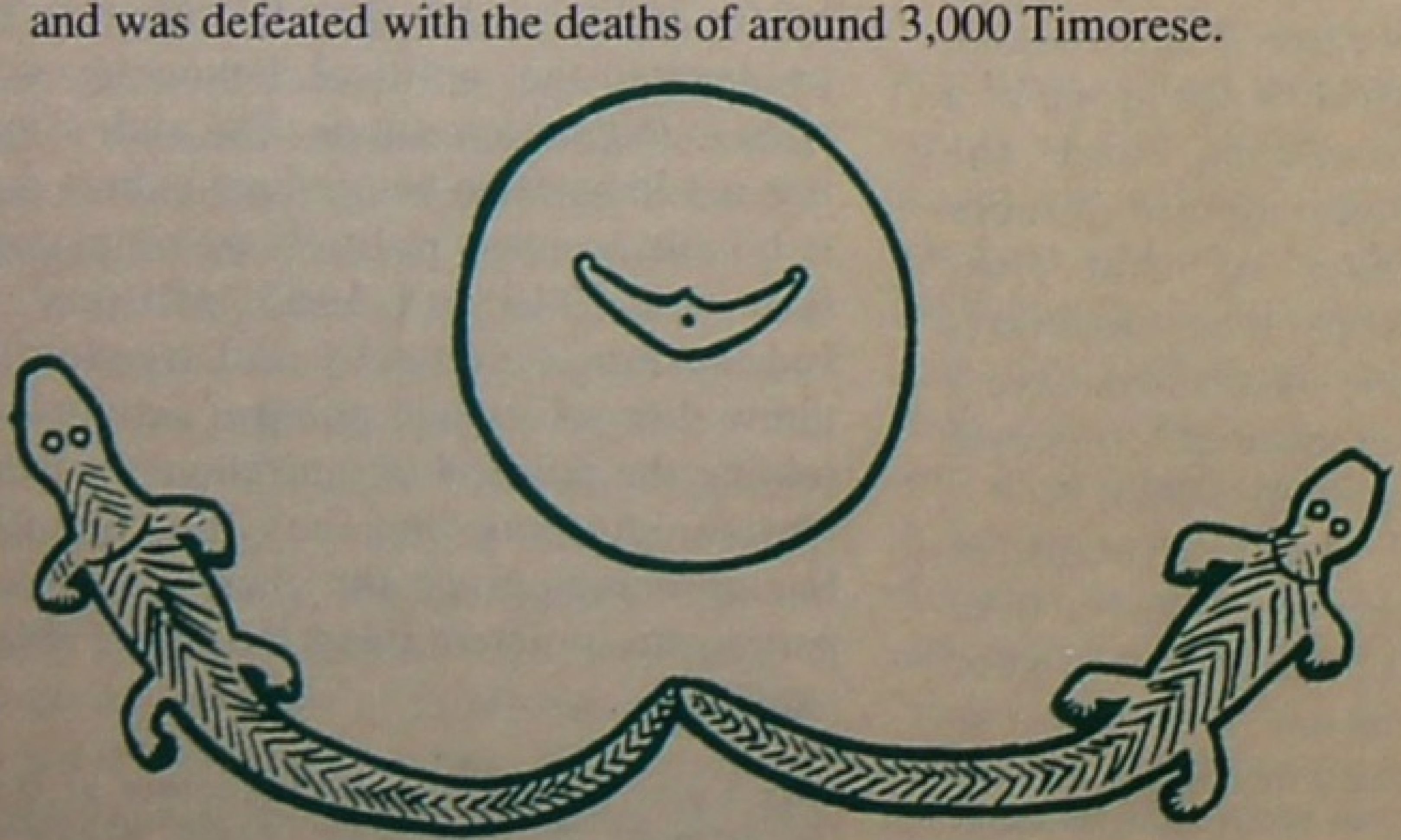
Compiled by **John Taylor**

1 Settlement

Many centuries ago successive waves of migrants, mostly Malay and Melanesian, settled on the island with the original inhabitants, the *Atoni* people of the central highlands. This ethnic mix was compounded by the arrival of Chinese, Arab and Gujerati traders, who visited Timor in search of its valuable sandalwood. The island was divided into kingdoms ruled by princes (called *rajas* or *liurai*) and clan leaders who exercised power in kin-related villages. These contained hamlets whose inhabitants grew subsistence crops and traded with each other. The first Europeans to settle in the area were the Portuguese, on the neighbouring island of Solor in 1566. They made annual trips to Timor to collect sandalwood and trade in finished goods. Their rivals in the region were the Dutch, who followed soon after, gaining control of most of what we now know as Indonesia.

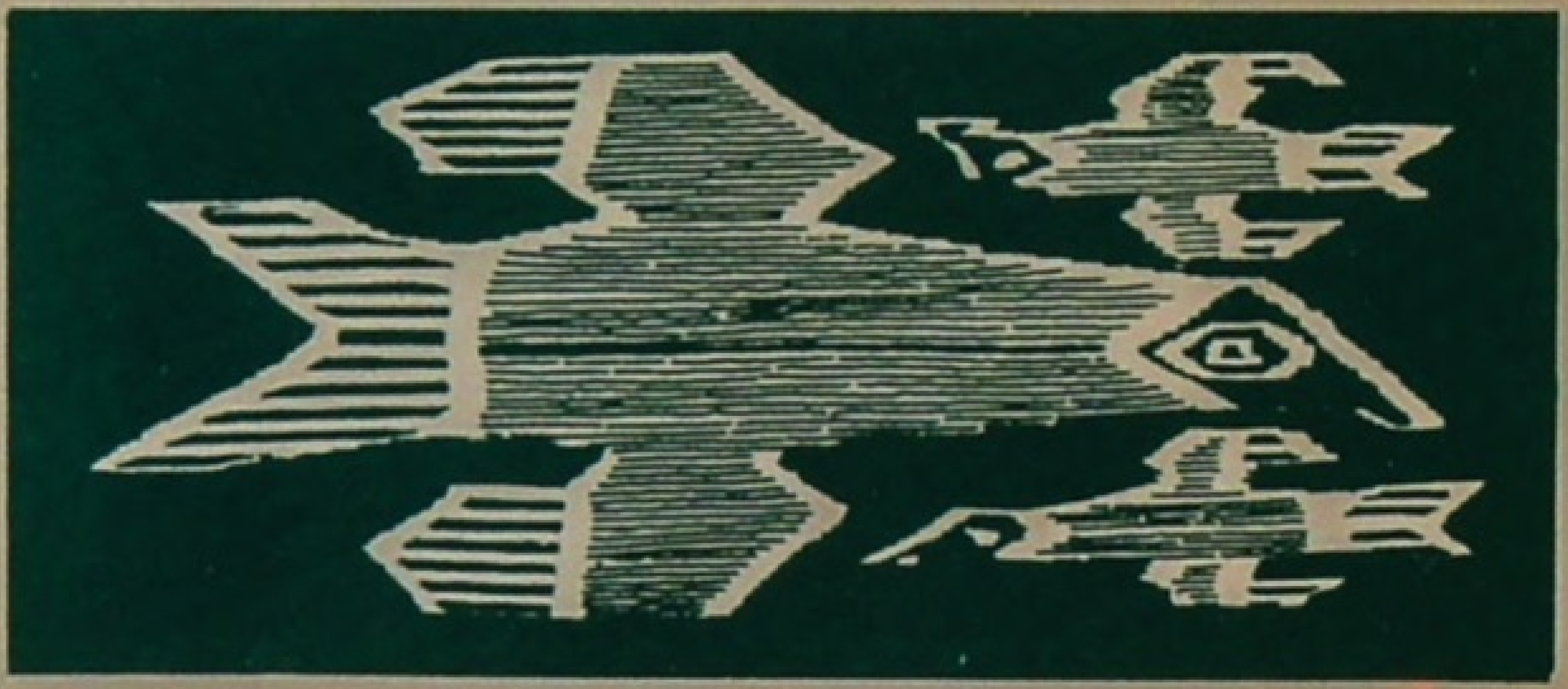
2 Colony

Although the Portuguese established a colonial administration in Timor in 1702, they disputed and fought with the Dutch for control over the island for the next three centuries. The two halves of the island finally were separated in an agreement signed by the two colonial powers in 1913 – the Dutch taking the west and the Portuguese the east. The Europeans profited from their control over the sandalwood trade and introduced coffee in the mid-nineteenth century, which became Timor's principal export, supplemented with rubber, tobacco, copra and peanuts. Revolts by the Timorese against colonial rule were frequent, and most of them were suppressed brutally. The last of these continued from the late 1880s until 1912, and was defeated with the deaths of around 3,000 Timorese.



3 Occupation

During the Second World War Timor was occupied by the Japanese, who encountered widespread resistance to their attempts to force the population to grow food, both for their troops and for export. By the time the Japanese surrendered in 1945 some 60,000 Timorese, or 13 per cent of the population, had died. In 1949 West Timor became part of the post-colonial Indonesian Republic. Portugal retained East Timor, adding a small 'legislative assembly' whose selected members were trained as an indigenous administrative élite. Economically, the Portuguese pinned their hopes on oil – discovered in 1972, and on an expansion of tourism. An embryonic nationalist opposition emerged in the 1960s based on young people educated in Catholic schools and the Dili seminary or trained in a radicalized Portuguese army.



4 Independence

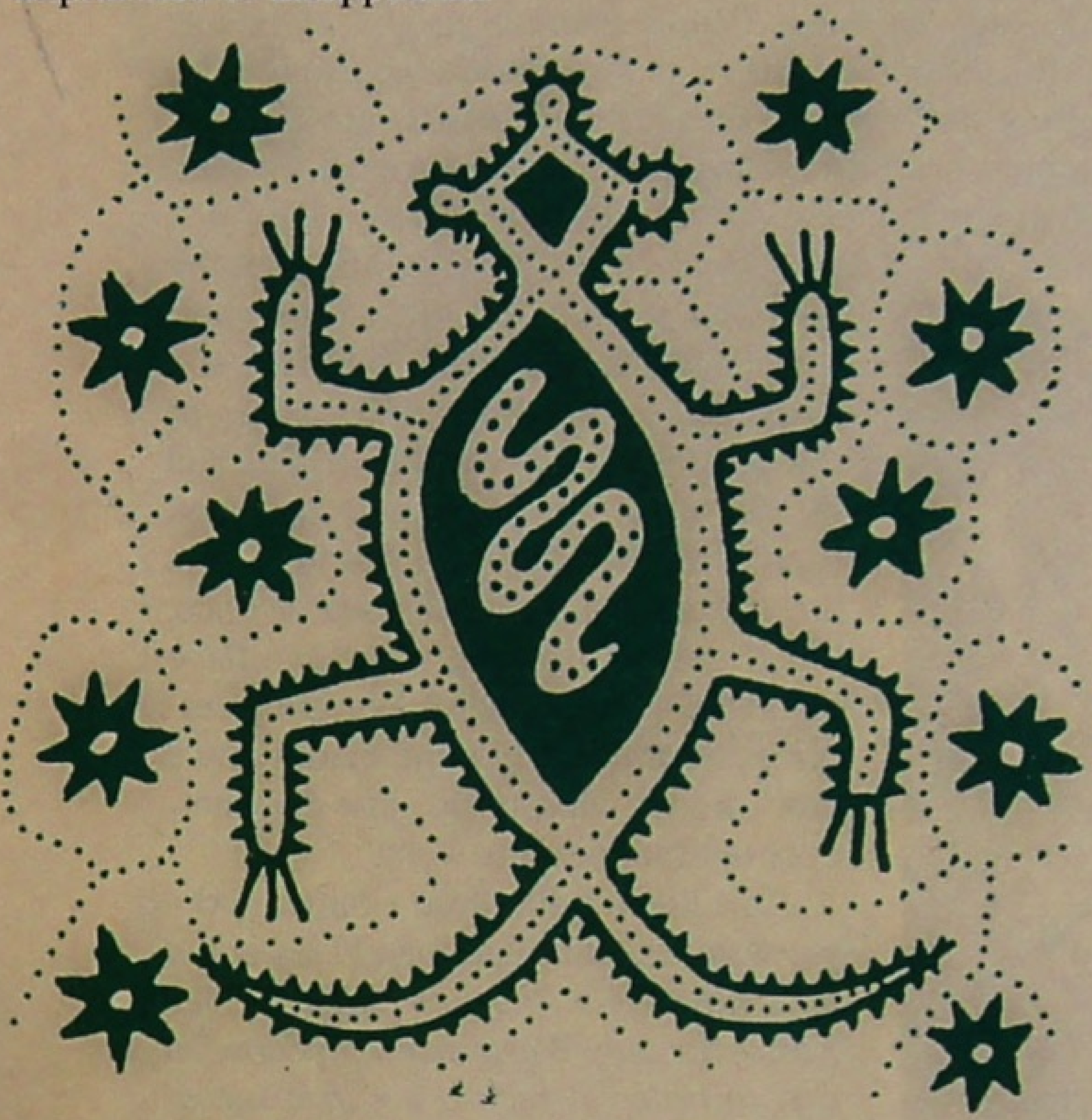
On 25 April 1974 the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement overthrew the Caetano regime and began a process of decolonization in Portugal's African and Asian colonies. In East Timor political groups were organized and given a free rein. In January 1974 the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) entered a coalition with the Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor (Fretilin). Both parties agreed with the Portuguese to move towards independence over a three-year period. The Indonesian military bribed and persuaded several UDT leaders to organize a coup in August 1975.

But by September Fretilin was in control of virtually all of East Timor. Its leaders continued to recognize Portuguese sovereignty and called repeatedly on the Governor to return and oversee the transition to independence. Lisbon refused and Fretilin's administration became the *de facto* government. On 28 November, with the Indonesian invasion imminent, Fretilin leaders declared independence, establishing the Democratic Republic of East Timor.

5 Invasion

On 7 December 1975 Indonesian armed forces invaded. The invasion was followed by brutal treatment of the civilian population – indiscriminate killings and rape in the streets of Dili, with buildings sacked and burned. By February 1976, with troops spreading out from the capital to occupy villages to the east and south, East Timor's Indonesian-appointed deputy governor, Lopez la Cruz, admitted that 60,000 East Timorese had been killed.

Despite this onslaught the Indonesians controlled only the coastal and border regions, and areas accessible from the country's tiny network of roads. Troop numbers were increased and draconian controls were imposed on the population, isolating the territory from the outside world. In an operation beginning in late 1977 – called 'Encirclement and Annihilation' – mountain areas where people had taken refuge were bombed. In 1978 and 1979 tens of thousands of East Timorese came down from the mountains, to be rounded up and resettled in strategic villages set up by the military. Many died of hunger. Those who were not transported to camps were either imprisoned or disappeared.



6 Control

Continuous military campaigns against the population had a devastating effect. In one called *Operasi Keamanan* ('Operation Final Cleansing') in 1981, males between the ages of eight and fifty were recruited to form human chains across the island to flush out Fretilin groups. After such campaigns many of the population were relocated in 'resettlement villages', distant from both their homes and the zones of fighting, where they were subjected to a rigorous system of internal control. Regular famines resulted.

Meanwhile, land outside the villages was devoted to the cultivation of cash crops for export in agricultural projects set up by the military, who appropriated most of the land previously under plantation crops. Land was transferred to migrants from areas outside East Timor as part of the Government's 'Indonesianization' strategy. Mosques were built at an increasing rate. East Timor's *lingua franca*, Tetum, was banned, and Bahasa Indonesian taught in schools. Informers, directed by appointed elders *(katuas)* became responsible for the surveillance of groups of 10 to 15 families.

7 Resistance

By 1979 Fretilin was almost destroyed as an organization. All its original leaders had been captured or killed, leaving behind a small group which managed during 1980 to reorganize the movement from the eastern tip of the island, attacking Indonesian targets in different parts of the country. Between March and August 1983 the Indonesian military and Fretilin agreed a ceasefire, which enabled Fretilin to gain support for its position internationally and to persuade the UN Secretary-General to act as a mediator in the conflict.

In August the Indonesian Government unilaterally broke the ceasefire. Fretilin organized ambushes and attacks on Indonesian troops, using support networks set up in the resettlement villages. In the late 1980s these attacks became less frequent, and in November 1992 Fretilin's leader, Xanana Gusmao, was captured. This was followed by the capture of his successor, Mau Honu, in April 1993. Currently Fretilin retains a resistance network in the centre, south and east of the territory, but is less capable of mounting major attacks than in earlier years; yet it continues to receive wide support from the population through an underground resistance network.

8 Opposition

Since the late 1980s opposition to the Indonesian occupation has shifted to younger East Timorese who have built up networks in the main towns and villages, notably Dili and Baucau. These groups organized demonstrations during the Pope's 1989 visit and for the planned visit of the Portuguese Parliamentary delegation in November 1991. When this visit was cancelled, a demonstration in Dili went ahead on 11 November. Its suppression by the military ended in the infamous Santa Cruz massacre. Despite a deeply conservative colonial role and antipathy to Fretilin during the pre-invasion period, the Catholic Church has been increasingly critical of the military.

Both the present and former Bishops of Dili – Carlos Ximenes Belo and Martinho Costa Lopes – have denounced torture, imprisonment and human-rights abuses. Church organizations have provided basic health and education facilities, and Tetum-speaking safe havens, despite increasing opposition from the military. In January 1985 the East Timorese Council of priests called for the right of East Timor to determine its own future and referred to the Church as 'being witness to a process which is slowly leading to the ethnic, cultural and religious extinction of the people of East Timor'.

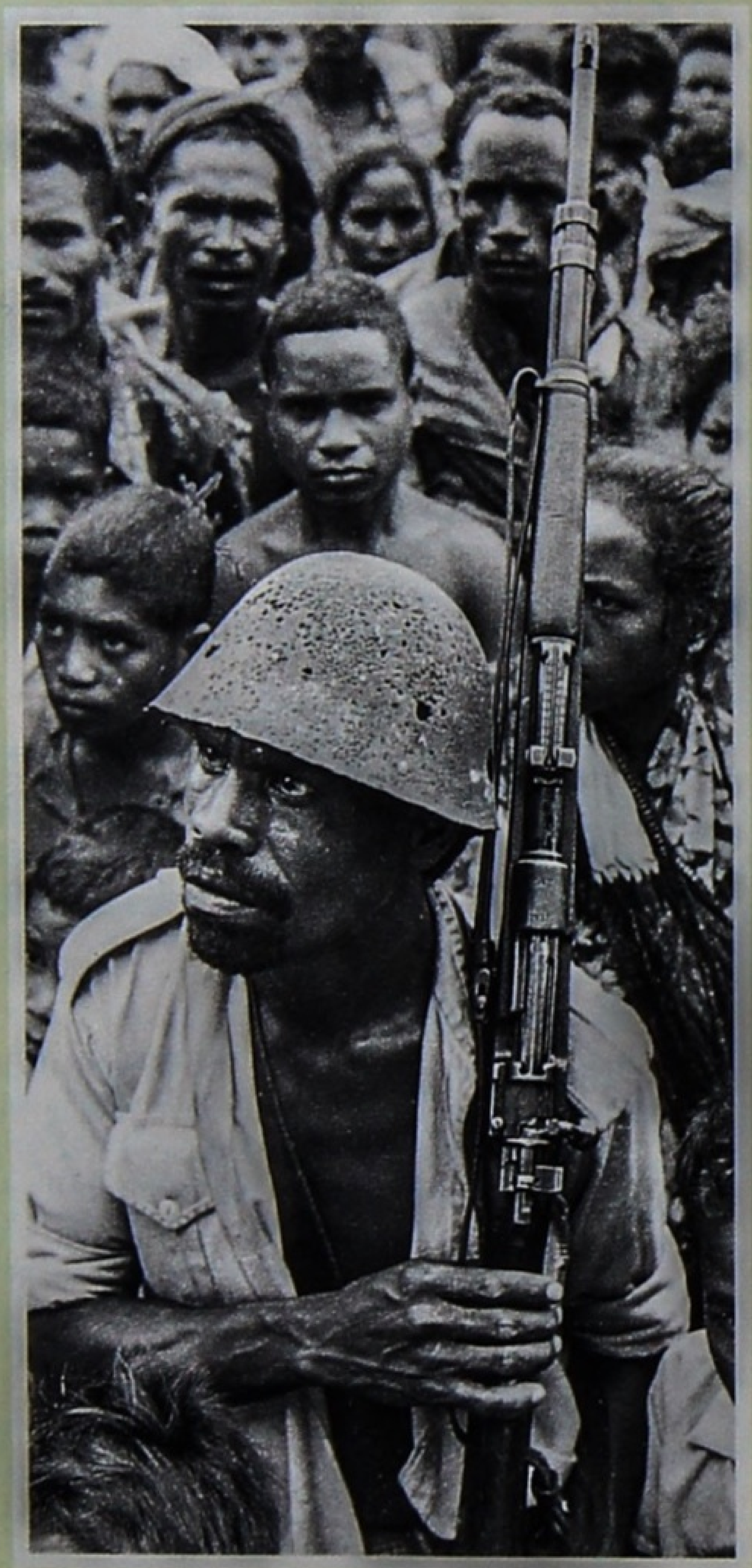
All designs from *Motivos Artisticos Timorenses e a sua Integração* by Ruy Cinatti, Istituto de Investigação Cientifica Tropical, Museu de Etnologia, Lisbon, 1987.

TESTIMONY

They count us and count the bullets

'Mr and Mrs Siong' witnessed the Javanese invasion of Dili in 1975. **'Mrs Siong'** told me that after we spoke her husband would probably have nightmares for some weeks.

Mr Siong: In December the Indonesians came during the early morning when it was still dark. There were a lot of green parachutes dropping from the sky and our soldiers shot up at them. Some parachutists were killed and dropped in front of the Toko Lay flats.



PENNY TWEEDIE

Mrs Siong: There were a lot of soldiers. They had long automatic guns with strings of bullets. They kept shooting over our heads. Then they told all of us to go out and kneel down outside, everyone, children too. We were numb, we didn't know what to do, blank and crying. Everyone kneels down and the Indonesians count our heads and count their bullets to see if they match! They ask if anyone is still in the house. They tell whoever has friends or relatives inside to get them out. People do this, get the others out and then all kneel down. We beg the Indonesians not to kill us.

They make us walk. Near the harbour there is an open space, a garden by the sea, like a park. There they ask us to kneel down again. This time they make us face the sea. Whoever is short must be behind, the tallest in front next to the sea so the soldiers can see every person.

The soldiers are behind us. I was holding the baby. They tell me to put the baby behind my back because they can't see the baby. They let me keep touching the baby if they can see it. Again they count us and count the bullets. Everyone is crying. We try to guess what the Indonesians say. All the languages are mixed together.

Mr Siong: At the harbour we have to pick up dead bodies. There were about 10 of them, two women and the rest men. I didn't know any of those people. Some of the men wore Portuguese army uniform, the women wore dresses. The bodies were just lying where they fell on the wharf; they had been shot.

There were a lot of iron pipes on the wharf and we must tie the dead bodies on to them with parachute rope and throw them into the sea. We tie the rope through the hole in the pipe and tie the body on to that.

After we threw in those dead bodies some Chinese Timorese from Colmera came, 17 or 18. I knew all of those people, they were friends and neighbours. All were too frightened to speak, there was no crying, no noise. People came in groups of two or three or four, stood on the wharf and were shot. One group after the other coming and coming, killed and thrown into the sea. Two were couples, one with young children who went with relatives. The other couple were elderly, and the rest were men.

A crowd of people outside the wharf could not see the others shot; they could hear a little, but they did not really know. Sometimes some of the people who were to be killed had to help us six to tie other people and then after it they were killed. Some are shot and fall into the sea at once, but if they fall on the wharf we have to tie the pipe to them. We are trembling, we are nearly gone mad, but we don't know what to do, just do whatever the Indonesians want.

One killed with those Colmera people was an Australian man [*This could only have been the journalist, Roger East – the only Westerner who chose to stay in order to record the invasion of Dili*]. The soldiers push him. He was talking to them saying, 'Not Fretilin, Australian'. He spoke English. I understood it: sometimes Australians came to shop where I worked.

He wore brown shorts, a cream shirt and sunglasses. I didn't notice if he wore shoes, no. He has short hair turning grey. He looks a strong man. They push him, tell him to face the sea. He refuses to do this. The Indonesians just fire at him. He falls straight into the sea.

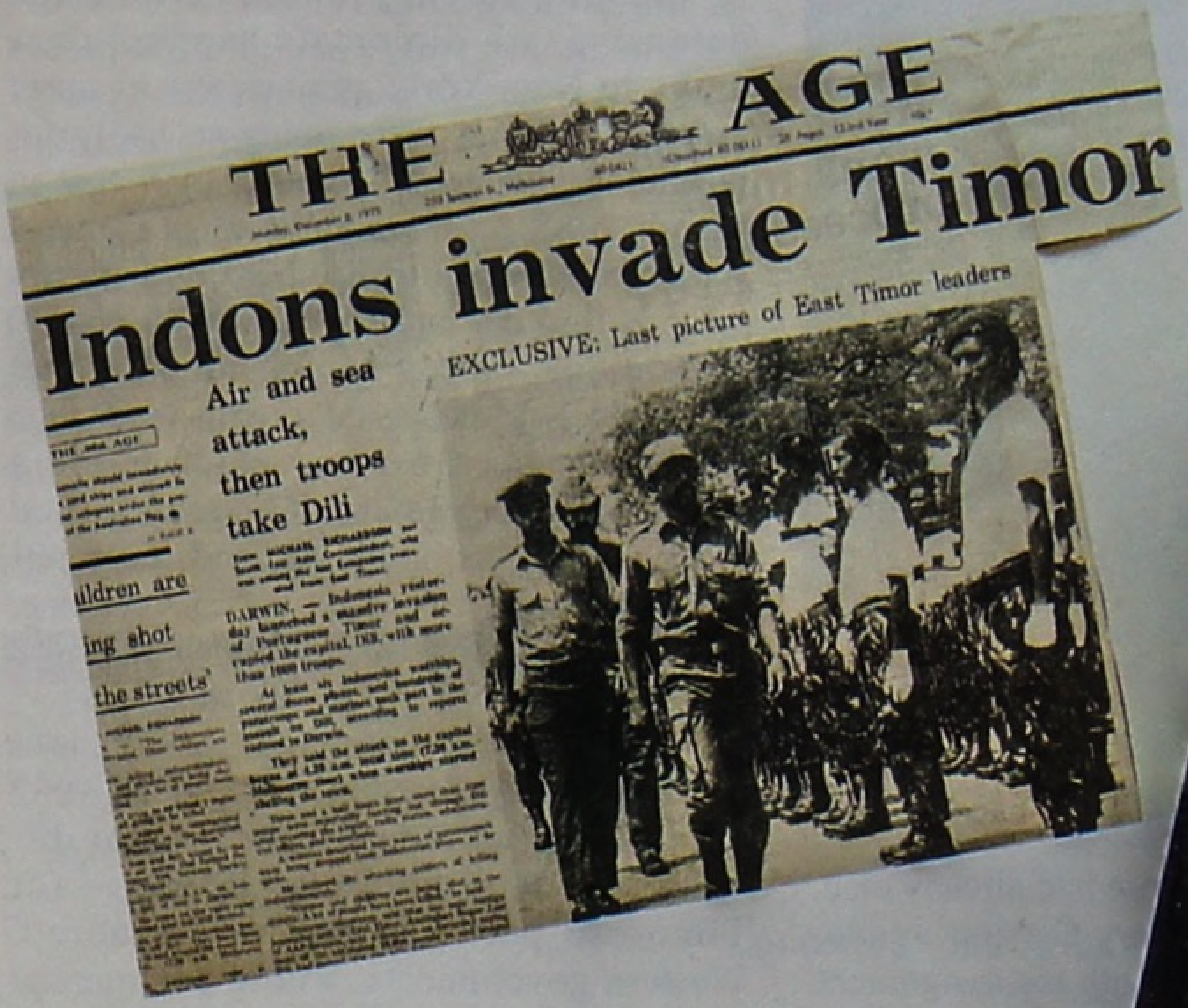
Next they bring the ten that had been working with us, digging the graves. The Indonesians tell them to stand and face the sea and then they are shot with a machine gun. Four people were father and son, but the Indonesians didn't know this. There on the wharf they kill the father, and the son must tie and throw his father into the sea. Then they kill the other son and his father is one of the six of us who must tie and throw his body.

They were the last killed that day, those 10 people. We do not know why they were killed. ■

From **Michele Turner**, *Telling – East Timor: Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*, New South Wales University Press, 1992.

For fear of a showdown

No-one questions that the Indonesian occupation of East Timor is illegal and violates the UN Charter. But what the UN says and what it does is not always the same thing. ***Carmel Budiardjo*** *tells a shameful tale.*



THE AGE

Indons invade Timor

EXCLUSIVE: Last picture of East Timor leaders

Air and sea attack, then troops take Dili

...ildren are ...ing shot ...the streets'

Betrayal of a dream briefly glimpsed in 1975 (above) but still not lost in 1991 (right).

LEFT: COURTESY JOHN TAYLOR; RIGHT: STEVE COX

'...the United States wished things to turn out as they did... The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective. That task was given to me and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success.'

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN, US AMBASSADOR TO THE UN IN 1975.

EAST Timor is one of a diminishing number of non-self-governing territories still on the UN agenda for decolonization. From 1975 to 1982 two Security Council resolutions and eight General Assembly resolutions were adopted on the 'Question of East Timor', reaffirming its right to self-determination and calling on Indonesia to withdraw. The UN still recognizes Portugal, East Timor's former colonial ruler, as the Administering Power and rejects Indonesia's seizure of East Timor as its 'twenty-seventh province'.

So why, more than 18 years on – with a third of the population, more than 200,000 people, dead – has the UN been so ineffective?

Basically because, as Ambassador Moynihan has said of the US, Indonesia's allies have wanted it to be. Five months before the invasion ambassadors in Jakarta were privately condoning Indonesia's plans to take over East Timor. In a cable to the Foreign Office in July 1975, Britain's ambassador said it was 'in Britain's interest that Indonesia should absorb the territory as soon as and as unobtrusively as possible and that if... there is a row in the UN, we should keep our heads down and avoid taking sides against the Indonesian government'. The US ambassador told his Australian counterpart he was 'under instructions from [Secretary of State] Kissinger personally not to involve himself in discussions on Timor with the Indonesians'. If Indonesia were to intervene the US would hope they would do so 'effectively, quickly and not use our equipment'. As for Australia, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam agreed, in talks with the Indonesian dictator Suharto in September 1974, that the eventual integration of East Timor into Indonesia was 'inevitable'.

The enormity of the UN's failure to help East Timor was thrown into stark relief when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990. To counter this invasion the UN Security Council remained in continuous session; it adopted more than a dozen resolutions to dislodge the aggressor, at whatever cost in human lives. A negotiated settlement was spurned as the West, using the UN as a shield, careered headlong into war.

In December 1975 the UN response was very different. A week before the Indonesian invasion the Portuguese Government drew the UN's attention to the Indonesian military build-up inside East Timor, already warning of the tragedy that was to befall East Timor. Five days after the invasion the General Assembly 'strongly deplore[d]' Indonesia's military intervention and called on it to withdraw its troops 'without delay'. The sponsor of the resolution, Algeria, avoided the stronger word 'condemn' to win wider support for East Timor. Even so, many Western powers could not bring themselves to vote against Jakarta and abstained. What worried them was not whether the UN Charter had been violated – as it clearly had – but how to avoid offending Indonesia. The 43 abstentions included the US, the UK, Australia, Germany and France. Japan, the leading investor in Indonesia's economy, voted against.

Ten days later, as the situation in East Timor rapidly deteriorated, Security

ONU ESTAMOS
PORTUGAL WHERE...
IS YOUR
RESPONSIBILITY
SIMBOLO
DE UNIDADE

STEVE COX

Young protesters defy the bullets to make their point, on the procession to the Santa Cruz cemetery.

Council Resolution 384 unanimously called on 'all States to respect the territorial integrity of East Timor' and for Indonesian troops to be withdrawn 'without delay'. This time the US, Britain and France voted in favour, not wanting to side so publicly with the aggressor at the more high-profile Security Council. The resolution also asked the Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, to send an envoy to East Timor for an on-the-spot assessment of the situation.

Had this investigation been pursued with vigour the UN might have acted decisively, but the mission was doomed from the start. Waldheim had little interest in what was for him a minor issue, nor was he prevailed upon by the Permanent Five to treat it otherwise.

In East Timor six weeks after the invasion the Indonesian army allowed only the UN envoy, Winspeare Guicciardi, to visit Dili, Manatuto and Baucau. Everywhere else Fretilin was in control or fighting was intense. Yet the UN accepted the lie that he could not travel further 'on technical and/or security grounds' or because the roads were 'impassable'.

Guicciardi's attempts to visit Fretilin-controlled areas from Darwin came to nothing when Australia refused logistical support for a UN flight to East Timor. A Portuguese offer of a corvette to land the mission in Fretilin strongholds was not taken up because Indonesia insisted on dictating conditions for the landings. Neither Waldheim nor the Western powers denounced Indonesia for refusing to comply with a unanimous resolution of the Security Council.

Shortly before the Security Council met to pass its second resolution on East Timor in April 1976, 'deputy governor' Lopez da Cruz, a leading Indonesian puppet, admitted that 60,000 East Timorese had already died.

Although the Secretary-General's envoy was asked to continue with his assignment, nothing further was done and, as Jose Ramos-Horta, Fretilin's representative to the UN, says in *Funu, the Unfinished Saga of East Timor*, 'that was the last I heard of Mr Winspeare Guicciardi'.

Since then the Security Council has not discussed East Timor, though the General Assembly continued for several years to adopt resolutions along the lines of those adopted in the wake of the invasion. Portugal, which vigorously pressed for action at the UN in 1975 and 1976, seemed to lose interest.

In late 1982 Fretilin drafted a resolution for the General Assembly authorizing the Secretary-General (Waldheim had now been replaced by Perez de Cuellar) to hold consultations with Indonesia, Portugal and Fretilin to achieve a comprehensive settlement. This would give the UN a more active role and perhaps win support from many of Jakarta's friends who had been voting against or swelling the abstentions. But de Cuellar was unhappy and persuaded Portugal to amend the wording to read: 'Consulting all parties directly concerned'. He gave an assurance that East Timor would be considered to be 'one of the parties', but subsequently interpreted the resolution as referring only to Indonesia and Portugal. This betrayal led to a decade of futile diplomacy, leaving East Timor bereft of any support from the world body.

The situation in East Timor had meanwhile changed dramatically. An all-out offensive by the Indonesians, equipped with US-supplied Bronco planes, transport aircraft, armoured cars and firearms, had all but destroyed Fretilin resistance by 1979. The population was forced down from the interior into strategic villages. By now the death toll had reached 200,000.

Yet within a year of the army capturing Fretilin's last stronghold on Matebian mountain in 1979 the guerillas were back in strength, forcing Indonesia onto the defensive. As diplomats haggled over drafts in New York, anxious not to upset Indonesia, things were going so badly for the Indonesian army in East Timor that in March 1983 – four months after General Assembly Resolution 37/30 had barely scraped through by 50 votes to 46 and 50 abstentions – army commander Colonel Purwanto held peace talks with resistance leader Xanana Gusmao, which led to a five-month ceasefire. Gusmao asked Indonesia to pass on his demands for a referendum to the UN. This was never done. Instead the Indonesian army launched a massive new offensive in August 1983.

Meanwhile in New York consultations initiated under Resolution 37/30 of 1982 got nowhere as Indonesia refused to discuss self-determination. Pressure for Timorese participation was ignored. Western governments, whose commercial ties and arms deals with Indonesia had soared, deflected calls for UN action by expressing satisfaction that bilateral talks were underway. The talks had become the pretext for doing nothing.

In March 1989 Bishop Belo, head of the Catholic Church in East Timor, injected a new urgency by calling for a referendum in a letter to the UN Secretary-General: 'Indonesia says that the people of East Timor have already chosen integration but the people of Timor have never said this... And we continue to die as a people and a nation.' Here was a simple message from a man desperate for a solution. It also put at risk his tenuous links with the Indonesian regime and the Vatican. Yet it was ignored by de Cuellar who never even acknowledged the letter. The Bishop had challenged the UN head-on for behaving as if a solution could evolve from talks between East Timor's former and present colonizers.

By 1991 the UN talks were bogged down in plans for a visit to East Timor by Portuguese parliamentarians. This might have been a breakthrough for the East Timorese – to meet representatives from a country which, they hoped, would extricate them from the agony of Indonesian occupation. Last-minute hitches in Jakarta forced Lisbon to call the visit off. Thousands of young East Timorese went ahead anyway with the demonstration they had planned for the visit, choosing a day on which the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture was visiting Dili. He was in a meeting with the military commander and did not see anything.

The result was a massacre of 200 demonstrators on 12 November 1991. Worldwide outrage forced some governments to reconsider their position, if only by at last bringing pressure to bear on Indonesia about atrocities that had been the everyday experience of the East Timorese since 1975. Some made tentative moves towards tying economic aid to Indonesia's human-rights record in East Timor. This led to a sharp rebuke of Indonesia by the UN Human Rights Commission in February 1993, in a resolution sponsored by the US and several West European countries. It called for special UN rapporteurs on torture, disappearances, extra-judicial killings and arbitrary detentions to visit East Timor. These visits have not yet taken place.

The massacre led to the breakdown of the UN-sponsored talks and it was left to the new Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to pick up the pieces. Talks were resumed in 1992, again involving only Indonesia and Portugal, though now accompanied by parallel consultations with East Timorese representatives. No major power has yet stirred itself to press East Timor's case at the Security Council or the General Assembly, though Boutros-Ghali's assistants for East Timor are known to be pressing for new initiatives.

In January 1994 the Secretary-General sent special envoys to Lisbon, Jakarta and East Timor. Consultations with the East Timorese – including Xanana Gusmao, the resistance leader now being held in a Jakarta prison, and Bishop Belo – were on their agenda.

UN involvement is closely tied to shifts and alliances in global politics. It will happen only if the major powers want it to. For nearly two decades neither governments nor the world body's chief executive have chosen to use the UN to help East Timor, preferring to avoid a showdown with the Suharto regime. The East Timorese have proved that jackboots and terror have not dented their yearning for independence. Now that there are small signs of progress at the UN the East Timorese have more reason to expect the UN to bring an end to their misery. ■

Carmel Budiardjo is a writer on Indonesia and East Timor, Organizing Secretary of TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, and co-editor of *TAPOL Bulletin*.

TESTIMONY

No hope for the world

'Lourenco' relives his experience of the Matebian encirclement in 1978.

OUR section in the east was the last to be attacked. In 1978 they started to come against us. At first we didn't resist, just watched the enemy, let them feel confident. Matebian mountain is a big area and there were 160,000 of us, fighters and civilians, divided into small groups.

On 17 October 1978 some Indonesians got right to the bottom of Matebian mountain and that's when we started to fight back. For those first two months, October and November, we were very successful and about 3,000 Indonesians died. Then they got angry and scared to come close and started to bomb us from the air. They bombed twice a day, in the morning and afternoon with four black planes. Their name I know now is Broncos, but we called them scorpions because they had a tail that curves up at the back like that insect. Their bombs left a big hole about two metres deep. Then they got new supersonic planes. Our people were very frightened of those because you didn't even hear they were there until they were gone. Those supersonics would zoom along the valley so fast we couldn't shoot them.

We knew by radio from the south zone that the Indonesians had dropped four napalm bombs there. Then they dropped two of these on us. I saw all the flames and heard people shouting and screaming. I was on another mountain but I could see well; there was a close view of it, straight across. Some of us set out straight away to help those people. By foot it took half an hour to go down and up again, and by the time we got there everything was completely burnt. We saw a whole area about 50 metres square all burnt, no grass, nothing except ash. On the rocks it was a brown, reddish colour and on the ground ash too; not ordinary grey ash, a sort of yellowish ash, like beach sand. You couldn't see where bodies had been. There was nothing except ash and burnt rocks on the whole area, but we had heard those people screaming.

We could find no bones or bodies, but people nearby said there were about a hundred people living there who were killed by this. The whole population was very upset – no bodies of those people left to bury. My cousin said: 'If this is what they can do there is no hope for the world'. ■

From **Michele Turner**, *Telling - East Timor: Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*, New South Wales University Press, 1992.

PENNY TWEEDIE

TESTIMONY

We talk with our eyes

The tranquil life of **Fatima Gusmao** (pictured below) was utterly changed by the Indonesian invasion. She re-enacted some experiences as she spoke.

DAVID MUNRO

WHEN I married Jose in 1975 I couldn't see any of my family there because they had left the country. They were very upset, they thought I was too young to decide to stay. They thought they lost me, that one daughter from their house was dead. For three years outside they didn't know I was alive. I was 18 years old then and Jose was six years older. Before he was our teacher at high school and a close friend. He taught natural science, about plants, animals, mountains and rivers, and also history. He was a good teacher and a very good person who cares for others.

My first baby was born on 12 September 1976. The baby came feet first. When he was born he went pale and dark. We try to massage, rub his heart, but he was too long without oxygen. We baptized him Jose. He died after two hours.

When my second baby was born in 1978 we were together in a secure place. We baptized him a Timorese name, Luang Hale. Luang is Jose's brother's name and my name in the bush is *Bi Hale*. In Tetun *bi* means lady and *hale* means a special type of big tree which protects people from the sun. If there is a wedding or christening you must find one of these trees to have it under. Also we squash the root of the hale tree and use the juice for our long hair, to make it very black and grow quickly.

I start thinking of it again, when I do this talking to you. I want to pass those moments again, even suffer because that was a part too. I'm talking about feelings. The feeling between people at that time was so good. The co-operation, to save lives, to defeat the famine. We have a women's organization and when we go to the farm to work we not only do the job but we support each other. For example, like me and you, we sit here talking.

We hear a shot and recognize it is from the enemy's gun. I say nothing to you, no time to speak. Watching each other we decide in that instant the same, to run together. We hold hands and run straight away. It is a very secure feeling to be with people who feel the same way. Others helped me survive; many like me, who had never lived outside a town, died quickly.

For five or six months we could stay together and things were calm and we could make food gardens. Then always in the dry season the Indonesians start coming again and we must move. If we can return when the enemy has gone we must be very careful. Anywhere they see we have lived they poison, we think they spray, the water, the plants. We look to see if there are dead animals to know if that place is poisoned.

We were travelling alone, Jose and I, carrying our son Luang Hale, through the Fatu Berliu area. The Indonesians were trying to surround us and we couldn't settle; everyone had to keep moving, so we couldn't plant and we had no food. We had been three days without eating.

I tell Jose that if I could drink cold water I could keep going. We find a little stream and go to the end where the water comes out cold from the ground, there it is very pure. I hold the baby and hide while Jose goes first, to test if it is safe, no enemy to catch us. When Jose returns I am so thirsty, so wanting to put my mouth in that cold spring water, but I bring some to the baby first. Then I go and stay drinking until I am very full. When I stand relaxed and look further I see a foot.

It is a dead man. Only one foot is out on the land, the body lies back down in the water with arms above the head. He is naked, his body is swollen and being eaten away. It is not one of our people. It is a dead enemy soldier. The water is already inside us, we could change nothing and I really liked that water, but always since then I have that picture in my mind, in my dreams, of that body on the water spring.

We keep walking away from the enemy. At the end of the day, at that time between light and dark, we are at the top of a mountain where it is flat and there are many bones in the green grass. I think someone has killed a lot of animals and been feasting. Because we were so hungry I was thinking of food. Jose told me not to say such a thing, to look more closely because these were people's bones.

The bones were white. Jose said he would see if they were our people's bones. He put a drop of his blood on and the bone drank it like a sponge. This is a traditional belief: if the blood had stayed on the outside of the bone it would not belong to us.

When we look more we see many people died there, over a hundred people, all sizes, many children too. We think they were killed all together because of the way they fall. They were not disturbed, those bones. They lie where they fall, one person on top of another, the baby on the mother's chest or child next to the mother, the hair still under the head, long dark hair of women.

We kneel down and pray for those people and ask God that no more of our people have to die like this, especially the children because children are innocent. We ask to understand why the Javanese come to our country to kill us.

It was the wet season and raining, between January and February 1979. Walking and walking we got to a high mountain in the Soibada area called Terras, a good place to hide. There were a lot of big trees, tall grass, rocks and caves, but no food. The only thing was a root, *maek*. Usually we feed it to pigs, who can eat it without harm, but if people eat it without cooking it in a very hot fire, there is poison which makes the body itch, the tongue swells up and you can die from not being able to breathe.

There were many caves, some big as this room. We hide there trying to make no noise, talking always very softly because echoes sound off the rocks. We know the Indonesians are around there, some of our people had seen some. So we didn't go far to find these roots, we found only a few small ones and it was too dangerous to build a big fire to cook them, because the enemy would find us, bomb us.

We were sick, our baby had diarrhoea. We had not eaten for many days. Our Luang Hale came to me and, like this, put his arms around my neck and hugged me and I sit and hold him. It was at a time like now, afternoon. We were inside a cave. I said to Jose that there was something different about the baby, his breathing was like sighing, but I did not move because the baby was holding on around my neck.

Jose knew our son was dying then but I didn't understand. I thought he was just very tired and wanting to sleep. I did not know it was what we call *agonia*, that time between life and dying, that our baby had started to die.

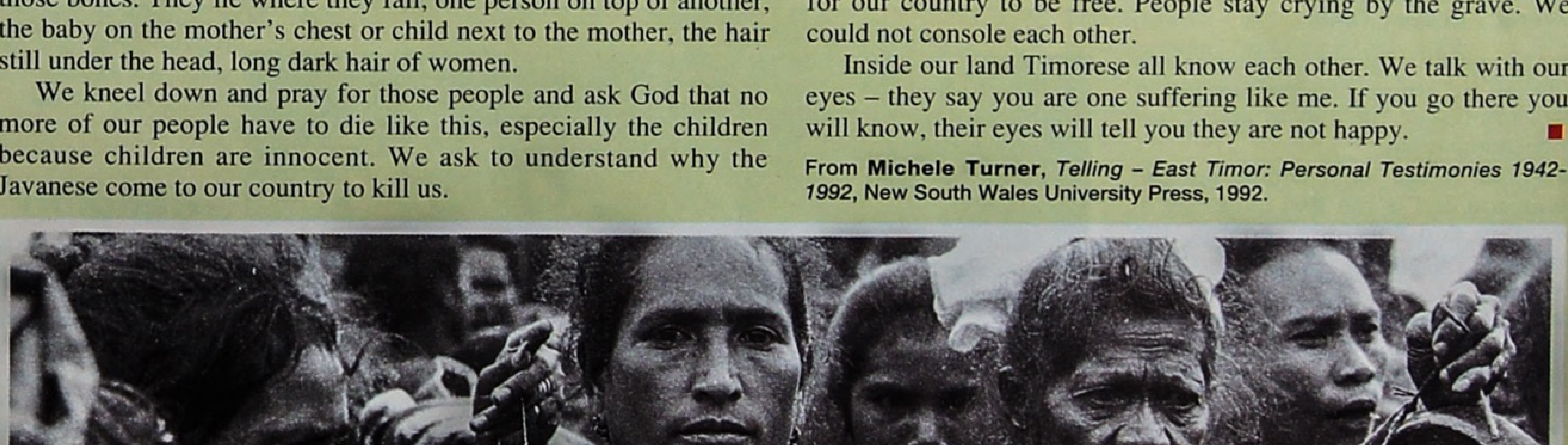
We sit for a long time and slowly I understand he is dead. His arms are locked tight around my neck. It was hard to separate us.

Don't cry, Michele, we just had to accept that separation, there was nothing we could do, no way to revive him. It is like a water pot dropped on the ground, it is gone, you cannot have that water again. But it is hard. Three times it happens to me, three babies die and this one was the hardest because I knew him so well for eight months.

We carried Luang Hale, wrapped in cloth, to where others were. As they died we tried to bury people. All the babies there died, eight more babies. Some died before and some after our baby. The other people did not want to bury our child there, they said it was not right that one of their leaders' sons should be buried like this, in a hole without a coffin. I said to them, 'Our baby died for the same reason your babies die, for our country's freedom. Their lives were taken for the same thing we are all looking for. The babies must lie together.' For each we made a small place, close together. We join our hands and pray, offer the souls of these innocent ones for our country to be free. People stay crying by the grave. We could not console each other.

Inside our land Timorese all know each other. We talk with our eyes – they say you are one suffering like me. If you go there you will know, their eyes will tell you they are not happy. ■

From **Michele Turner**, *Telling – East Timor: Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*, New South Wales University Press, 1992.



PENNY TWEEDIE

A colonized nation

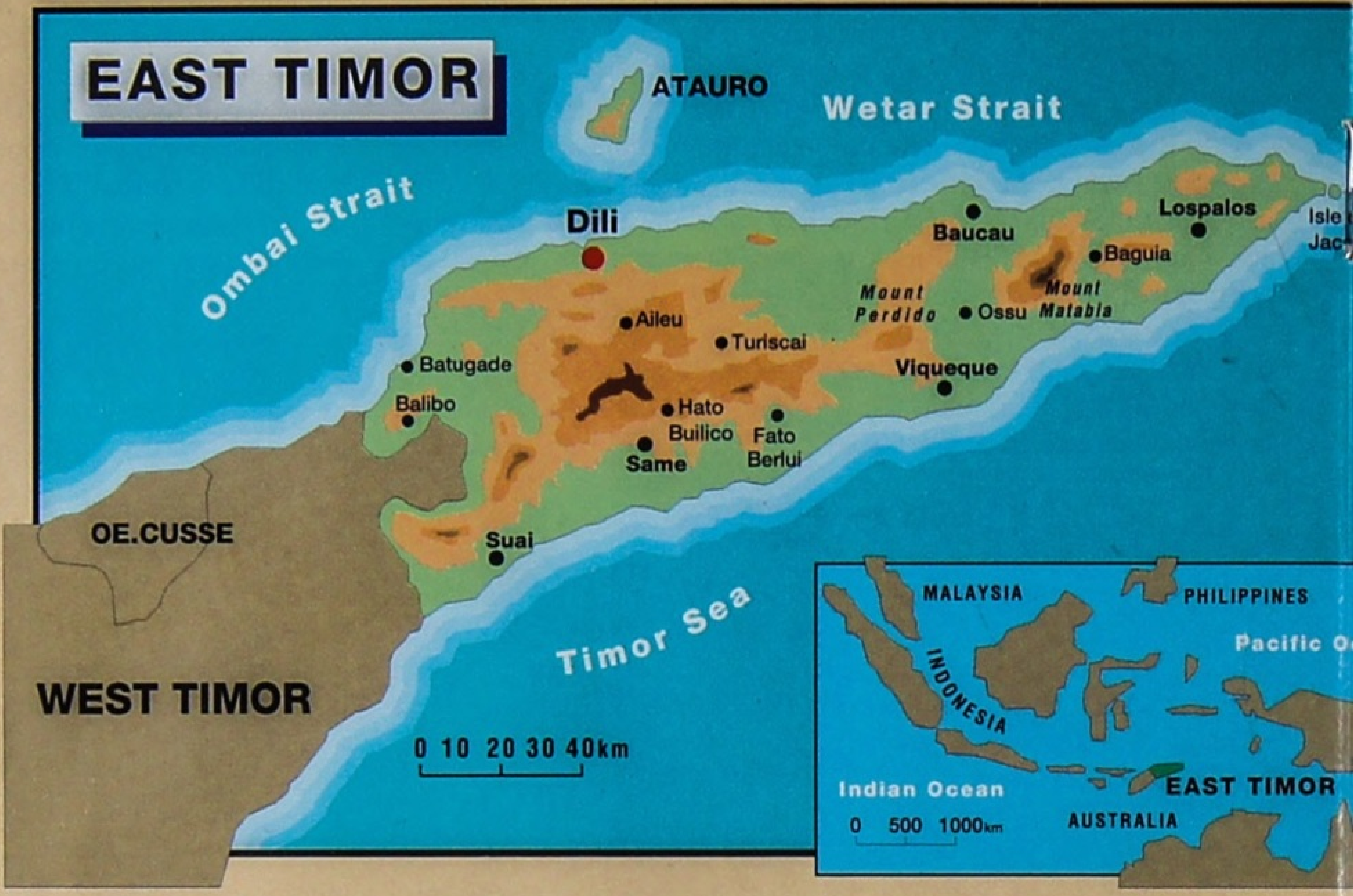
Eighteen years under Indonesian occupation have turned East Timor into a country with all the worst attributes of a colonized territory. Indonesia claims that *integrasi* of East Timor as its '27th province' rescued it from Portuguese colonialism. But Indonesian colonialism has wrought far greater havoc than the Portuguese ever did in nearly 500 years of colonial rule.

Compiled by ***Carmel Budiardjo.***

Population[1]

Between 1975 and 1979 an estimated 200,000 East Timorese – a third of the population – lost their lives because of war-related starvation and disease or because of massacres and atrocities.

- In 1980, with a normal growth rate of 1.7% per year, the population of East Timor should have been 754,000.
- The actual population in 1980 was 555,000.
- The present population level is about 800,000, of whom at least 150,000 are Indonesian immigrants.


EAST TIMOR
ATAURO
Wetar Strait
Ombai Strait
Dili
Baucau
Lospalos
Isle
Jac
Baguia
Mount Perdido
Ossu
Mount Matabia
Aileu
Turiscai
Batugade
Viqueque
Balibo
Hato Builico
Fato Berlui
Same
OE.CUSSE
Suai
Timor Sea
WEST TIMOR
0 10 20 30 40km
MALAYSIA
PHILIPPINES
Pacific O
INDONESIA
Indian Ocean
0 500 1000km
EAST TIMOR
AUSTRALIA

Economy[3]

East Timor is a resource-rich country, despite claims that it would not be viable if it became independent.

- *Coffee* is produced by large plantations as well as smallholders. Since the invasion companies run by the Indonesian army have taken over the trade, forced down prices and frequently confiscated coffee in transit.
- *Marble* quarrying, like coffee and sandalwood, is now controlled by army-backed monopolies.
- *Oil* and *gas* are the largest natural resources with large reserves in the Timor Sea between East Timor and Australia. In 1989 Australia and Indonesia concluded the Timor Gap Treaty for joint exploitation of these reserves in violation of international law. Twelve multinational companies in Australia, Japan, the US and UK won contracts. The Treaty has been challenged in the Australian courts by the East Timorese resistance movement and in the World Court by the Portuguese Government.
- *Unemployment* is widespread among East Timorese. Most jobs go to Indonesians.

Language[2]

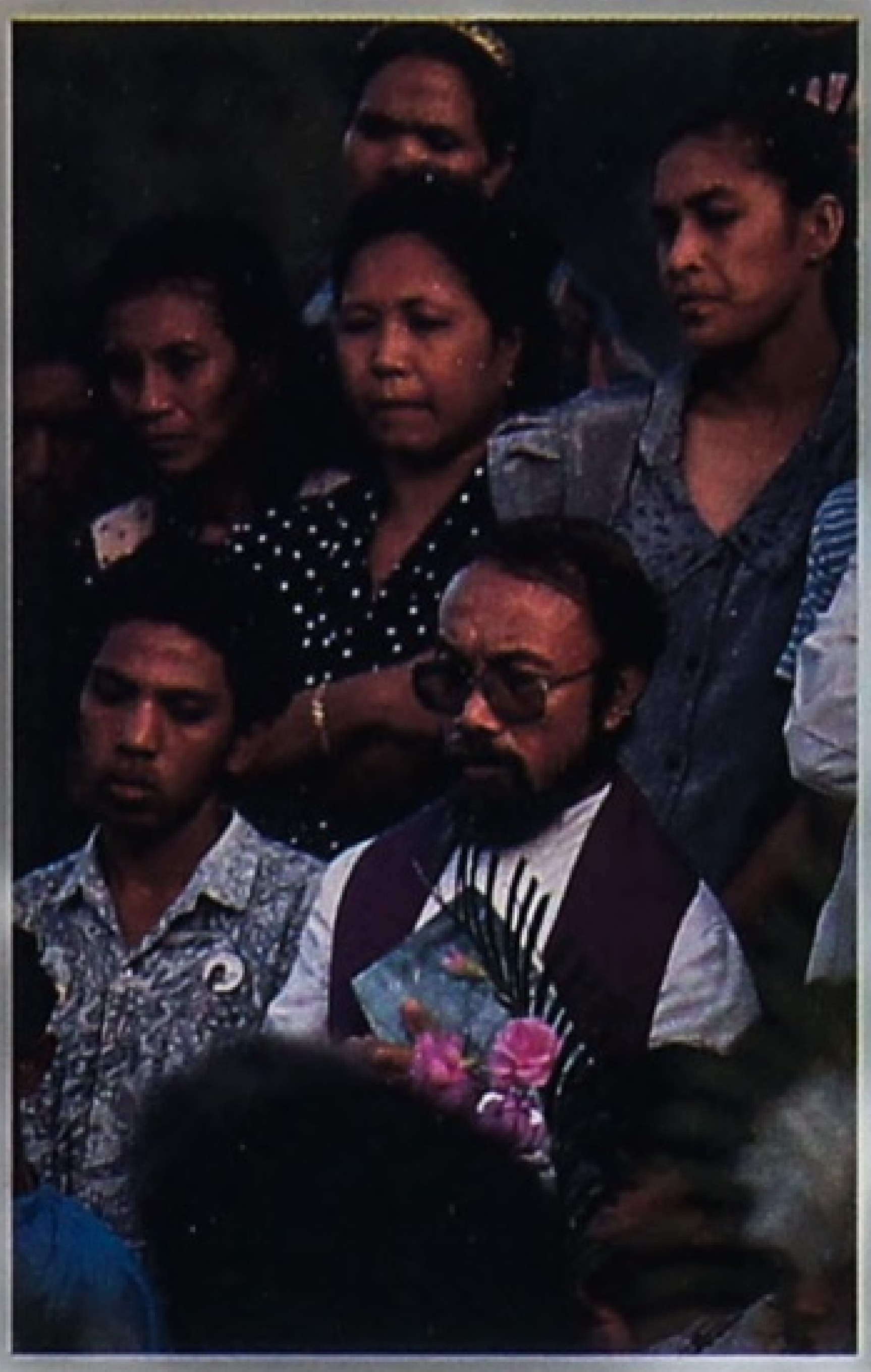
There is great ethno-linguistic diversity in East Timor.

- At least 14 distinct languages are spoken by ethnic groups ranging in size from over 100,000 to just a few thousand people.
- *Tetum* is the most widely-spoken language and is the first language in western and southern regions, the second language in many other regions.
- *Portuguese* was the official language until 1975. It is widely spoken by people who were educated during the colonial era. It is still used in many homes alongside Tetum.
- *Bahasa Indonesia* is the sole medium of instruction and communication under the Indonesian regime.
- *Tetum* and *Portuguese* have been banned throughout the education system since 1975.

Religion[4]

**Up to 1975 most Ea
invasion they have flo**

- *Roman Catholicism*
the religion of about 3
account for over 80 pe
only East Timorese in
people can gather in la
seek sanctuary.
- *Muslims* formed a m
settled in the country
Indonesian troops and i
been built. Islam is se
challenge to the suprem



Military[6]

The Bali-based army commander claims that combat troops are being reduced now that armed resistance has 'ceased to be a threat'. The head of the Catholic Church in East Timor says this is untrue.

- There are an estimated 14 battalions (roughly 650 men in each) in East Timor.
- At least one of these is there to fight the armed resistance. It is replaced every few months with fresh troops from various parts of Indonesia.
- Territorial battalions 'dedicated to road and village construction' spy on the population, ambush villagers and, when necessary, engage in combat.
- Indonesian police are on duty throughout the country.
- Regular troops of Kodim, the East Timor military command, are located in villages for intelligence gathering and control.
- East Timorese foot soldiers are recruited into the Indonesian army – they also fight the armed resistance.
- Red-beret special troops – the most feared of all – spy on, arrest and torture East Timorese.
- Paramilitary forces known as *hansip* and *ratih* consist of East Timorese civilians trained as militia.
- A new force of 3,844 East Timorese has been formed and is now being trained.

Environment[7]

East Timor has suffered extensive deforestation.

- The region from Venilale to Los Palos in the east is now known as 'dead earth', a deserted, uncultivated plain where former inhabitants are dead and gone and all human activity has ceased.
- Much vegetation has been damaged by the use of defoliants – possibly Agent Orange – during the intense military operations in the late 1970s.
- Army-backed companies plunder resources without regard for environmental protection legislation.
- Forest fires occur annually in the dry season. Farmers who used to get rid of dried undergrowth by controlled burning have been forced down to the coastal plains. Much of the burning is now done by troops to prevent guerrillas from using foliage as cover. Without the careful management of former days the torched areas are quickly covered by the noxious, tough and impenetrable high grass *imperata cylindrica*.

Health[5]

The standard of health of the East Timorese is very low. Nothing has been done by the Indonesians to break the cycle of poverty, malnutrition and disease.

- *Infant mortality*: 160 deaths per 1,000 births. East Timor and Mali (in West Africa) have the highest infant mortality rates in the world. An Indonesian health official admitted in November 1993 that at least 70 per cent of children under five are malnourished.
- *Disease*: the most prevalent are tuberculosis, endemic malaria, pneumonia, parasitic infestations, skin infections and severe anaemia, especially in women after childbirth and children.
- *Sanitation*: most of those resettled since 1977 live in huts standing on bare soil, crawling with insects, and with animals running in and out – formerly their houses were on stilts, giving protection against vermin and keeping animals below. There are no toilets, hardly any running water. Parasites spread through human and animal faeces.
- *Hygiene*: is abysmal at the hospital in Baucau, one of the few built by the Indonesians. There is a lack of basic equipment, patients with tuberculosis are separated from surgical cases by nothing more than a curtain.
- *Health centres*: built by the Indonesians in the towns are poorly equipped and have few medicines. East Timorese are suspicious of Indonesian medical personnel, none of whom speak Tetum, and prefer to visit the small number of clinics run by dedicated Catholic nuns.

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ninute community, mostly Arab families who
as traders. The overwhelming majority of
immigrants are Muslims. Many mosques have
een as the religion of the occupiers and a
nacy of Catholicism.

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1 Catholic Church census for 1974, Indonesian census for 1980. 2 Geoffrey Hull, *Mai Kolia Tetun, a Course in Tetum-Praca*, Australia Catholic Relief and Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, 1993. 3 George Aditjondro, *From Memo to Tutuala*, a lecture at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga, Central Java, on 4 August 1993 (publication forthcoming). 4 Fr Gregor Neonbasu, *Keadilan dan Perdamaian di Diosis Dili* (Justice and Peace in the Dili Diocese), Dili, September 1992. 5 Neill A Borowski, World Population to Stabilize in 2200, Knight-Ridder Newspapers; *Jakarta Post*, 9 November 1993; Dr Helga Brgel, 'East Timor' in *Medicine and War*, London, April-June 1993. 6 Bishop Belo, 'A Diary of Oppression' in *Timor Link*, Catholic Institute of International Relations, London, October 1993. 7 Report of a visit to East Timor in August 1990 by Gabriel Defert, author of *Le Genocide Oublie;* personal testimonies of East Timorese in exile.

FAR LEFT: PENNY TWEEDIE; BOTTOM RIGHT: STEVE COX; ALL OTHERS: DENNIS SCHULZ

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A predatory Hawk from British Aerospace.

Touting for terror

***Mark Curtis** focuses on one of the most active participants in the trade in repression with Indonesia – the British arms industry.*

THE supply of British arms to Indonesia is an issue of grave concern for two main reasons. First, the legitimacy of the military dictatorship in Jakarta is enhanced by such sales, narrowing the options of those opposing repression within Indonesia. Secondly, it is believed that British-supplied Hawk aircraft have been used in Indonesian offensives against East Timorese. Frigates, submarine communications equipment and surveillance radar from Britain have also helped the Indonesian military to isolate East Timor from the outside world through a naval blockade. Saladin, Saracen and Ferret armoured vehicles supplied by Britain, meanwhile, have been used for repression in Indonesia after the invasion of East Timor, as have counter-insurgency aircraft which, according to retired US admiral Gene La Roque, 'changed the entire nature of the war'. Supplies of transport aircraft, armoured cars, rifles, mortars, machine guns and communications equipment enabled Indonesia to conduct the slaughters in East Timor in the late 1970s.

Major British arms sales began in 1978, when British Aerospace (BAe) announced an export order for eight Hawk jet trainer aircraft, Rolls Royce engines, spares and training of pilots and engineers. Britain refused to give assurances that the aircraft would not be used in a combat role. Further sales of Hawks and three contracts worth over $300 million for the Rapier air defence system followed, whilst the Royal Navy supplied three frigates worth $40 million to the Indonesian Navy in 1984. By 1987 other arms companies were touting for business with Indonesia, with Rolls Royce signing a technical agreement with Indonesia's state-run aerospace company, Thorn EMI reportedly aiming to sell a radar system, and Vickers a light tank.

These deals were signed amidst continuing terror in Indonesia. In 1983-85, as the contracts for the air defence system were being signed, 3,500-4,500 people were murdered by army death squads. Similarly, on the same day in 1991 that a co-production agreement between BAe and Indonesia was reported, the US press observed that 'foreign human-rights investigators and Western diplomats in Jakarta now estimate that up to 5,000 people have been killed or have "disappeared",' in Aceh province. 'Although there has been killing on both sides,' the report continued, 'human-rights activists say most of it appears to originate with the Indonesian army'. Amnesty estimated 2,000 deaths between 1989 and July 1993, with 'most of the victims' having been 'ordinary villagers living in areas of suspected rebel activity'. The Indonesian military commander in Aceh province was quoted in November 1990 as saying that 'I have told the community, if you find a terrorist, kill him. There's no need to investigate him... If they don't do as you order them, shoot them on the spot, or butcher them.'

In September 1991 *Indonesian News* (published by the Embassy in London) reported that UK Defence Minister Tom King met his Indonesian counterpart, Benny Murdani, to discuss 'improving military co-operation between the two countries'. Murdani had organized and commanded the first invasion of East Timor in 1975. He had also issued, in 1983, a message to resistance leader Xanana Gusmao to the effect that 'there is no country on the globe that can help you. Our own army is prepared to destroy you if you are not willing to co-operate with our republic', before declaring that he would show 'no mercy' to resistance forces in East Timor. In December 1992, meanwhile, the same source reported that Margaret Thatcher was presented with an honorary medal from the Indonesian Engineering Association by President Suharto at the State Palace in Jakarta. Referring to the award, Thatcher reportedly said: 'I am proud to be one of you'.

Britain was untroubled by the Dili massacre of November 1991, when the Indonesian army killed 200 East Timorese demonstrating against the occupation. The announcement of the sale of a navy support ship was delayed in January 1992 owing to the international outcry over the massacre – and went ahead the following month. It was also later reported that Britain was offering places in military training programmes for three Indonesian army officers. Their boss – chief of the armed forces, General Try Sutrisno – had for-

Bringing the blood back to British Aerospace

Chris Cole is a gentle, soft-spoken man who conducted an extraordinary raid on the factory that makes arms for Indonesia. He spoke to **Vanessa Baird**.

At three o'clock in the morning on 6 January 1993 I cut my way into the British Aerospace site at Stevenage. I wore a white lab coat (with 'BAe bomb disposal' written on the back of it) and a fake pass. I knew where to go because I had written to British Aerospace saying I was a student of radone technology, I wanted to visit them, and they had sent me a map of the site.

I headed for the building where they made the radones – or radar nose-cones – for the missiles and military aircraft. I intended to damage those for the Hawk military aircraft because these are being exported to Indonesia. After trying the door I used a hammer to break one of the windows on an emergency door and pushed down the bar. The first building was a design office. I uncovered one of the drawing boards and found blueprints for a trailer system for missiles. I had with me a baby's bottle containing about an inch of my blood which I poured over the military blueprints.

I wanted to use blood in this way because British Aerospace's premises are so clean and sterile and their publicity is so glossy and glamorous, with images of missiles disappearing into the sunset. There is never any kind of acknowledgement of what the weaponry they produce does. I wanted to bring the blood back to British Aerospace, to say in a very clear way, 'this is a bloody business'. I had with me photographs of friends' children and some pictures of Iraqi children playing in the rubble. I put those pictures together with the blood on the blueprints to make people think.

VANESSA BAIRD

Chris Cole: 'disturbing consciences'.

I went into the testing area and hung up a banner reading: 'Heal the world, swords into ploughshares'. Then I broke into the building where the radones were. There were dozens of them. I hammered the radones. These are very sophisticated and finely machined so just hammering on them can make them useless. Then I sprayed slogans around the building.

I was on the site for about two hours. It was very dark and I was quite scared because the security guards could come in at any moment and I didn't know how they would react. They finally spotted me as I was leaving and asked me what I was doing there. I put my hands up and replied: 'I have come to disarm British Aerospace'.

I was held in custody and charged with doing $712,000 of criminal damage. During this time I got lots of letters of support for my action, and from my fellow prisoners too, once I had explained about the situation in East Timor. A lot of prisoners understand about oppression and exploitation; that's why half of them are in there.

At my trial I conducted my own defence, arguing that I was 'using reasonable force to prevent crime'. I particularly focused on the issue of East Timor, saying that British Aerospace and the British Government knew exactly what was going on and were well aware of the 10 United Nations Resolutions against the occupation. By supplying Indonesia with these sophisticated deadly weapons they were permitting murder or conspiracy to murder.

The trial lasted four days and ended with a hung jury. This was a big surprise to me, I must admit. I was retried five days later. This time British Aerospace produced one of their lawyers as an expert witness. In his statement he said that British Aerospace always abided by the law and never contemplated breaking it. After three days' trial I was found guilty of criminal damage and sentenced to eight months, half to be served in prison and half on probation. Because I had already served six months on remand I was released immediately.

I've been campaigning against British Aerospace for about six years now, and will carry on doing so. I remember several years ago having a meeting with two British Aerospace directors during which they told me that in their 'game', as they called it, 'we have to leave our consciences at the door'. So I have tried to disturb the consciences of the British Aerospace people. I've heard that people in East Timor know about the action and were encouraged by it. That has touched me deeply. ■

Chris Cole is a member of *Swords into Ploughshares*, which can be contacted at NVRN, 162 Holloway Road, London N7.

MICHAEL NICHOLS / MAGNUM

Monument in Jakarta to President Suharto, and grand designs for military rule propped up by investment and arms from the West.

merly promised to 'wipe out all separatist elements'.

In April 1993 Foreign Secretary Hurd visited Indonesia and signed an agreement for a $98 million British loan to the country. On the same day as Hurd arrived in Jakarta, a UN special envoy expressed his desire to meet with Xanana Gusmao, captured leader of the East Timorese resistance movement, who was eventually given life imprisonment after his 'trial'. The Indonesian news agency, Antara, reported that 'referring to human-rights issues, Hurd said that Western countries cannot export Western values to developing nations without making adjustments to local economies and cultures. Differences in cultural life and economic level are decisive factors for the adoption of Western values by developing countries, he said.' Antara could further note that: 'What is done by Indonesia is proof of its recognition that basic freedoms such as freedom for union, freedom to express opinion and press freedom is a fundamental right, he [Hurd] said'.

With such apologetics BAe could endure few moral qualms about signing a $750 million contract for 24 Hawk aircraft (along with $75 million-worth of engines from Rolls Royce) two months after Hurd's visit, in June 1993. The Managing Director of BAe Defence declared that the deal built on the 'strong business relationship which has evolved' between BAe and Indonesia, whilst Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind stated that the sale would 'enhance the existing good relations between the United Kingdom and Indonesia'. 'Indonesia is a very exciting part of the world,' a representative of Rolls Royce had observed the previous year, when Britain was on the verge of signing a deal for 40 Hawks, becoming Indonesia's second largest arms supplier.

The principal reason why Britain (and the West) has acquiesced in Indonesia's brutal rule at home and violence in East Timor is that the Suharto regime has consistently offered Western businesses the opportunity to benefit from the country's political 'stability', most notably by exploiting the country's vast mineral resources. A few months before the invasion of East Timor, a Confederation of British Industry report noted that Indonesia presents 'enormous potential for the foreign investor'. According to one press report the country enjoyed a 'favourable political climate' and the 'encouragement of foreign investment by the country's authorities'. RTZ, BP, British Gas and Britoil are some of the British companies who have since taken advantage of Indonesia's 'favourable political climate'. By 1992 a spokesman for the East Timor independence movement termed Britain 'the single worst obstructionist of any industrialized country' over promoting international action on East Timor.

Leading Western aid donors are continuing their economic support for the Suharto regime, with agreements to provide $4.2 billion in 1991, $3.9 billion in 1992 and $5.1 billion in 1993. A US Department of Commerce publication notes that Indonesia offers 'excellent trade and investment opportunities for US companies' under a headline reading: 'Indonesia: trade opportunities here too good to be ignored'.

East Timor itself also offers Western business interests the prospect of substantial profits, with Australia leading the way. A year after the invasion the *Japan Times* reported on negotiations between an Australian oil company and Indonesia on extracting the vast oil resources in the Timor Sea, whose '200-mile stretch of water constitutes the only gap in the resources line agreed between Australia and Indonesia'. An Australian official commented that with the dispute over East Timor 'Australian access to a potentially good oil area remains in doubt'. 'Until the East Timor issue is out of the way and fully resolved,' he commented, 'there is little we can do publicly.'

In December 1989 the resources issue was finally resolved by an agreement to jointly exploit the Timor Sea, involving Australian, British and US companies, amongst others. A month following the Dili massacre, in December 1991, an untroubled Australian Government approved 11 oil-production contracts with Indonesia.

There have been some recent signs of US willingness to put pressure on Indonesia over human-rights abuses in East Timor. In 1992 Congress halted the US-Indonesian military training programme and in July 1993 the US blocked the transfer of four warplanes from Jordan to Indonesia. In September the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee voted for an amendment to the Foreign Appropriations Bill which asks the President to consult with Congress to determine whether improvements in the human-rights situation have taken place before approving arms sales.

There have, however, been no signs from the British Government that a moratorium on arms sales is in the offing. Rather, further sales of Hawk aircraft are expected to follow shortly. The evidence suggests that Britain's policy will continue to be dictated by commercial interests which – with numerous precedents – override considerations of human rights and international law. It would prefer to profit from the socio-economic conditions offered by the Indonesian military regime despite the fact that, according to Amnesty International, 'disregard for human life is an integral part of the Indonesian security forces' approach to its work' and 'in the quarter of a century since it came to power, the Government of Indonesia has been responsible for a staggering range of violations of human rights'. ■

Mark Curtis is a former Research Fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

TESTIMONY

Your feelings don't work

'Jorge' is a bright young man. His experience is common in wars of occupation. He was in a state of great emotional turmoil.

I don't know, not in numbers, I don't know how many people I've killed. I've been killing since I was 18. It upsets me when I think about these things, that's why I spend all weekend and nights at the pub.

I was in high school, a student, when the war started in Timor. I had no political ties, didn't belong to any party. My friends and I were forced to join the Indonesian army. We were warned: all who didn't join their army had to take the consequences. That means they say you are Communist. None of us wanted to but there was no way not to fight. If you don't fight you get killed yourself.

We had to destroy the village of Turiscai. At first it was attacked with mortar fire. Then napalm was used. I think the people in Turiscai had run away but there were a lot of stone houses there, and the order was to destroy the place. Then I was in a big operation to capture Mount Perdido. There they used another method: from helicopters they drop drums of petrol and when it lands they fire into it and it just blows up everywhere. After that the ships start to fire too, and when the ship stops the tanks start.

I had Indonesian friends; some of their army people were not so bad. You see, Indonesian people are against their government too. They don't like Javanese officers. But we were friendly with the ones who were not Javanese, who came from other islands, some of them Christians. They were invading our country, they told us they were forced to go to Timor.

I was forced to kill my best friend. I don't want to talk about it. I don't feel good when I think about it. He was a really close friend, we were in the same classroom at school. They knew he was my friend and I was forced to shoot him. They do these things to test you. It's deliberate.

I think the war in my country won't stop because the Indonesian army are cruel and they want to keep the war going. It's their way of getting money, of getting promoted. They don't care how many are killed, their soldiers, our people. ■

STEVE COX

Whispering terrible things

Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes, Bishop of Dili until 1983, visited Australia after he had been pressured into resigning from the position. He has since died.

People came all the time to tell me in secret, to clear their conscience of the things they were forced to do or see. Even out of the confessional, all the time people were coming, knocking softly on my door to talk to me because they felt so guilty when they were forced by the times to do things they knew were wrong. For example, it was common in 1980-81 to take groups of people after interrogation up in a helicopter from Lospalos to Jako (a little rocky island) and drop them to smash there, or to fly over the sea and drop them. Some Timorese had to go with the soldiers to help do that.

For us in the Church it was terrible, there was no-one the people could go to for help except us, and we could do so little. Each time I went to the commander and complained; for years I did this. Maybe it helped for a short while, but really nothing; the military treated us with contempt, so after five years I started to speak out. I spoke in the church against the military. I told them that if they wished to kill me they knew where I was, I was ready for death.

I talked with Indonesian officers and doctors about the resettlement villages. They bring people down from the mountains to the low ground where there is malaria. They sometimes built tin houses but they have no medicine there. The people do not like to be there, they would rather be back on their own land. They get depressed and sick and die there.

We had some food and medicine to give away to people in need but it was never enough. People don't like to beg, you have to ask them what they need. We had rice and milk to give for the children. We received money from abroad through the Church to buy food and medicine. It was funny, of course we must buy it from the Indonesians; maybe it has been given as aid but still we buy it. But that doesn't matter, we don't think of this, just keeping as many people alive as we can, because food was always a problem since the war. I took food to give when I went around.

In Indonesia they try not to let their own people know what happens in Timor. In Dili Hospital Indonesian soldiers who are wounded asked me to contact their wives. Sometimes I could do this. The military often does not tell the wives. When I went to Jakarta many wives and children of Indonesian soldiers came to me asking what had happened to their husbands. ■

Both extracts from **Michele Turner**, *Telling – East Timor: Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*, New South Wales University Press, 1992.

The darkest page

The East Timorese saved many Australian lives – and perhaps even Australia itself – when the Japanese occupied Timor during World War Two. ***James Dunn*** *describes how, when the chance came to repay the debt, the Australian Government chose to do nothing.*

It is now widely acknowledged that the Timorese people have suffered a cruel injustice, to which the international community failed to respond. Few are familiar, however, with the anatomy of this act of rape, the result of a sordid conspiracy by a group of Indonesian generals. Perhaps even fewer may be aware that it was aided and abetted by the Australian and US Governments who knew what was transpiring, and yet did nothing to obstruct what was ultimately to become a tragedy of genocidal proportions.

The saga began almost 20 years ago when the Lisbon coup of April 1974 toppled the old Salazarist order in Portugal. At first conditions seemed conducive to the emergence of a Timorese Republic. Indonesia had repeatedly denied any claim to the Portuguese colony, on occasion stressing the people's right to self-determination. The country was too poor to attract much interest from the outside world. But this backwardness did not deter the optimism of the Timorese themselves. And with the territory's fertile valleys and the promise of rich oil deposits their optimism was not unfounded.

The presence of Australia immediately to the south was a comfort to the Timorese nationalists. An expectation of Australian support was founded on the Timorese experience during the Second World War. That war had little meaning to them, not least because Portugal was neutral, but thanks to Australia's intervention the colony was to become a theatre of the Pacific war – and one of its worst victims. Unstinting Timorese support led to a successful rearguard campaign, which may well have prevented an invasion of Australia. The human cost of the Timorese involvement was staggering. More than 10 per cent of the population perished at the hands of the Japanese.

The notion that Australia would discharge its wartime debt and assist the birth of an independent East Timor was firmly in the minds of most Timorese leaders. Furthermore, in 1974 Australia was under the inspiring leadership of that great reformer, Edward Gough Whitlam. Whitlam's close relationship with President Suharto suggested that Australian views would carry weight in Jakarta.

The conspiracy to forcibly integrate East Timor had its beginnings in mid-1974, and involved a group of influential Indonesian generals, including Ali Murtopo, Benny Murdani and Yoga Sugama. Their motives, as confided to Western contacts, was that a republic of East Timor would become a base for communist insurgency. The immediate aftermath of the US withdrawal from Vietnam was indeed a time of nervousness in Jakarta, but a more serious concern was on their agenda. It was feared that the emergence of an independent East Timor would act as a stimulant to other separatist movements in the eastern islands of the Republic, where Javanese dominance is resented.

The plotters, however, were not insensitive to possible international complications. Their planning was based on a calculated assumption that East Timor's annexation would not be challenged by the international community – if it were accommodated by Australia and the US. As events unfolded it turned out to be a shrewd calculation. At the end of 1974 a covert intelligence operation codenamed *Operasi Komodo* (after the large lizard that lives on the island of Alor), with the aim of neutralizing the Timorese independence movement, was set up in Jakarta. Exploiting a weakened Portuguese administration, in 1975 demoralized by a deep political crisis in Lisbon, Indonesian agents were to succeed in creating divisions, distrust and eventually conflict between the major Timorese political parties, Fretilin and UDT, both of which favoured independence. In August a brief civil war resulted, with Fretilin quickly overpowering its opponents and emerging as a kind of *de facto* administration of East Timor, the Portuguese having withdrawn to the offshore island of Atauro.

The Indonesian response was direct military intervention in the form of covert operations, designed to create the impression that the civil war continued. One of these operations led to the killing of six

AUSTRALIAN-
INDONESIAN RELATIONS

COURTESY OF JOHN TAYLOR

Firm friends in government: Australian premier Gough Whitlam and Indonesian dictator Suharto exchange gifts in 1974.

newsmen from Australia, who were virtually executed by a force led by Colonel (now Major-General) Dading Kalbuardi, following an attack on the town of Balibo. The Balibo affair should have led to a major crisis in Australian-Indonesian relations. Instead it merely exposed the level of Australian accommodation. Information from intelligence sources disclosed to Canberra within 24 hours of the incident that Indonesians were responsible for the killing. But it moved neither Mr Whitlam nor his successor, Malcolm Fraser, even to protest to Indonesia. For the Indonesian generals, who had halted their operation in the expectation of an international incident, it was the green light for a major assault.

By August 1974 the Whitlam Government had decided that the best solution to East Timor's future was for the territory to be integrated into Indonesia. Its view soon became known to the architects of *Operasi Komodo*, and was conveyed to President Suharto by Whitlam himself at their Wonosobo meeting in September 1974. Australian intelligence agencies and diplomats – as well as the Americans with whom they shared their information – were able to monitor the progress of Indonesian military preparations to assault East Timor. Each step towards annexation was known to officials in Washington and Canberra. They were also aware of President Suharto's reluctance to allow the invasion, a reluctance that could have been exploited to prevent the invasion. But, to use the words in one ambassador's cable, they 'chose to let events take their course'.

The invasion of Dili was therefore not a surprise attack. While Australia gave half-hearted support to the UN resolution, within a year Prime Minister Fraser was to announce that the time had come to 'put East Timor behind us'. And putting Timor 'behind us' meant ignoring, or even discrediting the reports of gross human-rights violations which regularly came out of the territory, usually from Church sources. In practice the Suharto Government was shielded by the West from international probing while Indonesian forces set about subjugating the people of East Timor. In January 1978, undeterred by persistent reports of Indonesian atrocities in a territory from which the International Red Cross was excluded, Australia recognized Indonesian *de facto* control. The Opposition Labour Party protested, but within a year of its election victory the Hawke Government endorsed Australia's support for integration.

Hawke's successor, Paul Keating, has demonstrated even less compassion for Timorese. To Keating it is an affair of the past, which he now tries to talk off the international agenda. The killings at Santa Cruz in November 1991 were an 'aberration', and Jakarta's reaction a 'responsible' one. During his recent visit to Washington the Prime Minister took to urging US congressmen to soften their criticisms of human-rights abuses in Indonesia.

But for many Australians this sorry tale of accommodation of the rape of a small neighbouring state is the darkest page of our history. ■

James Dunn is a foreign affairs columnist who lives in Morya, New South Wales, and has followed events in East Timor closely for many years. Prior to 1975 he was the Australian Consul in East Timor.

TESTIMONY

And there I was, alive because of them!

John (Paddy) Kenneally speaks of his memories as a young private with the 2/2nd Independent Company of the Australian Army, which was stranded in Timor by the Japanese invasion in 1942, and of his anger at the subsequent betrayal of the East Timorese people.

Firm friends: Paddy Kenneally (left) still returns to East Timor.

COURTESY OF PADDY KENNEALLY

We went to Timor and brought nothing but misery on those poor people. That is all they ever got out of helping us – misery.

And there I was, alive because of them! In 1942 we were just a handful of men, short of everything and fighting an all-conquering enemy. We were the only unit from the Philippines, Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies which didn't surrender and survived, and only because of their help. We were living off them. We arrived in Timor with plenty of ammunition but only one month's ration and we were there for twelve! They didn't sit down and say, 'The fight's between you and the Japanese. You paddle your own canoe.' If they hadn't given food to us we'd have had to take it, because we had no money at the start and we weren't going to starve, and once you start to grab, abuses creep in. This is true of every army in the world. It wouldn't have stopped at taking food, there'd be taking money and women and anything else going. Once we'd started those sort of relations we wouldn't have lasted a month because they'd have informed on us and you couldn't blame them.

The government has never really acknowledge our debt to the Timorese from the War. Governments are pretty unreliable, you can't leave your conscience with them. In 1975 everyone behaved very badly. I thought it was an absolute disgrace. No one seemed to care about the Timorese. About all they got out of it was that we put a monument to them at a place called Dare, on the heights overlooking Dili.

We donated so much and the government put in some money and built a memorial in the form of a pool and a shelter for the natives as they travel in and out from the bazaars. I'd say now it would be more like a memorial to betrayal, seeing what's happened to the Timorese with Indonesia and we've done nothing to help them. ■

From **Michele Turner**, *Telling – East Timor: Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*, New South Wales University Press, 1992.

ACTION

What is to be done?

PENNY TWEEDIE

The action you can take depends to some extent on the specifics of your government's relations with Indonesia, but the main themes are:

CALL ON GOVERNMENTS TO:

- Support, at the UN General Assembly, East Timor's right to self-determination.
- Condemn Indonesia's human-rights violations at the UN Human Rights Commission and its Sub-Commission for the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The 1994 Session of the Human Rights Commission, its 50th, takes place between 31 January and 11 March 1994. The Sub-Commission will start in late July and continue throughout August.
- Press for immediate implementation of the UN Human Rights Commission's Resolution on East Timor adopted on 11 March 1993. In particular, governments should be urged to press the Indonesian Government 'to invite the Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to visit East Timor and to facilitate the discharge of their mandates'. [Paragraph 9 of the Resolution.]
- Ban the sale of all military hardware to Indonesia because of its illegal occupation of East Timor and the gross abuse of human rights throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

LOBBY YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES TO:

- Press governments on these demands and to make preparations for a group of parliamentarians to visit East Timor. A request to visit East Timor

DAVID RANSOM

ACTION

should be addressed to the Indonesian Embassy in your country, citing the Statement issued by the UN Secretary-General after the UN-sponsored talks between the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal in New York on 17 September 1993 which states that 'both ministers... reaffirmed the need for further facilitating access to East Timor, *inter alia* by the United Nations and humanitarian and human rights organizations'.

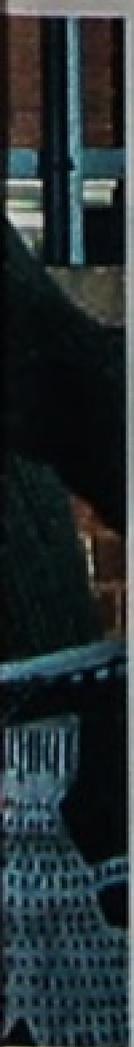
CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF

Xanana Gusmao, leader of the East Timorese resistance, who is serving a 20-year sentence in Cipinang Prison, Jakarta: and for the immediate and unconditional release of **all East Timorese political prisoners** being held in Dili and in various parts of Indonesia. Messages of solidarity can be sent to **Xanana Gusmao, Fernando Araujo** (serving a nine-year sentence) and **Joao Freitas da Camara** (serving a 10-year sentence) at the following address:

Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Cipinang, Jln Raya Bekasi Timur, Jatinegara, Jakarta Timur, Indonesia.

ANNIVERSARIES TO REMEMBER FOR SPECIAL CAMPAIGNS:

- **November 12**: Santa Cruz massacre in 1991, when nearly 200 peaceful demonstrators were killed
- **November 20**: Xanana Gusmao's arrest in 1992
- **November 28**: East Timor's declaration of Independence in 1975
- **December 7**: Indonesia's invasion of East Timor in 1975



David against Goliath

In December 1993, to mark the eighteenth anniversary of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, **Hugh Dowson** (right in photograph) undertook a 100-hour hunger strike outside the Filton, Bristol factory of Rolls Royce PLC. Here the Adour engines for the Hawk aircraft are made. He was joined for 24 hours by **Anthony Waterhouse** (left in photograph). 'I see myself as David against Goliath,' says Dowson. 'Each time there's a press article or a radio interview it gives me an extra stone to put into my little slingshot so that I can make an impression on Goliath's rear end.'

Solidarity Groups

The following are some of the groups to which you can write. If your country is not listed, write to the NI. We may have further information not included here for lack of space.

EAST TIMOR

Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Maubere/CNRM (National Council of Maubere Resistance), Suite 25a, 24 Bayswater Road, Kings Cross, NSW 2011, Australia, tel 2 368 0762, fax 2 356 4970. The CNRM has representatives in Angola, Canada, Japan, Mozambique, Portugal, the US and Western Europe/The Netherlands.

East Timor Relief Association/ETRA, PO Box 23, Fairfield, NSW 2165, Australia, tel 61 2 728 7395/891 5861, fax 891 2876/726 6319.

Fitun (Star), an occasional publication in English issued by Praxis, Pott Street, Bethnal Green, London E2 0EF, UK tel 44 71 729 7985, fax 44 71 729 0134.

AOTEAROA / NEW ZEALAND

East Timor Independence Committee, PO Box 5510, Auckland, tel 9 520 0179, fax 9 376 2829.

East Timor Independence Centre, 60 Ferry Road, Days Bay, Wellington, tel/fax 4 562 8820.

East Timor Support Group, PO Box 1905, Christchurch, tel 3 366 2802, fax 3 365 2919.

AUSTRALIA

AETA (Australia East Timor Association), PO Box 93, Fitzroy 3065, tel 3 386 3582, fax 3 428 0050.

CIET (Campaign for Independent East Timor), Ist Floor, 155 Pirie St, Adelaide SA 5000. Also at: GPO 2583, Canberra ACT 2601, tel 62 477 962, fax 62 688 581.

Hobart East Timor Committee, 2/65 Bay Road, New Town, Tasmania 7008.

AFET (Australian Federation for East Timor), Box 2155, Darwin NT 0801, tel 89 832113.

BELGIUM

SOS Timor, Square Meeus 21a, B-1040 Brussels, tel 2 5514 3139, fax 2 234 7054.

BRAZIL

Grupo Solidario, rua Haddock Lobo 1310, apto 42, 01414-002 São Paulo, fax 11 853 6830.

CANADA

East Timor Alert Network, PO Box 562, Station P, Toronto M5S 2TI, tel 416 531 5850; or 104-2120 W 44th St, Vancouver, BC V6M 2G2.

FRANCE

Association de Solidarité avec Timor-Oriental, 11 rue Palissy, 94200 Ivry, fax 1 4260 3969.

Agir pour Timor, 65 Bld Hippolyte Marques, Bat D9, 94200 Ivry, tel/fax 1 4960 6813.

FIJI

Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific, 83 Amy Street, Toorak, Suva, tel 679 304649, fax 679 304755.

FINLAND

East Timor Committee/Committee of 100, Mechelininkatu 8 B 58, 00100 Helsinki, tel 358 0 490 537, fax 358 0 147 297.

STEVE COX

GERMANY

Watch Indonesia, Alvenslebenstr 4, 1000 Berlin 30, tel 30 215 1287, fax 30 215 1839.

INDONESIA

Infight, Tromol Pos 1410, Jakarta 13014, tel/fax 21 471 1388

IRELAND

East Timor Ireland Solidarity Campaign, 210 Le Fanu Road, Balleyfermot, Dublin 10, tel/fax 353 1 623 3148.

ITALY

East Timor Committee, via Fondobanchetto 43, 44100 Ferrara, tel 532 765770, fax 532 210792.

JAPAN

Free East Timor Coalition, Kure YWCA, 3-1 Saiwai-cho, Kure, Hiroshima 737, tel 823 220 962, fax 823 222 684.

MALAYSIA

East Timor Information Network, 116 Jin Bunga Raya, Gelogor, 11700 Penang, tel 4 875 591.

MOZAMBIQUE

Grupo de Solidariedade com Timor-Leste, Av Vladimir Lenine, 2404 PPH 5-4-1, Maputo.

NETHERLANDS

East Timor Federation (BOOT), PO Box 40066, 1009 AB Amsterdam.

NORWAY

East Timor Committee/SAIH, Huldreveien 23, N-1374 Bergen, fax 22 362280.

PHILIPPINES

Initiatives for International Dialogue, 2 Matulin Street, Teachers Village, Quezon City, Metro Manila, tel/fax 2 921 6774.

PORTUGAL

Commission for the Rights of the Maubere People (CDPM), rua Pinheiro Chagas 77, 2 esq, Lisbon 1000, tel 1 357 4718, fax 1 353 4009.

SWEDEN

East Timor Committee, Box 70341, S-10723 Stockholm, tel/fax 8 648 3193.

UNITED KINGDOM

Coalition for East Timor, PO Box 2349, London E1 3HX, tel/fax 71 639 4700.

TAPOL, Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, 111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey, CR7 8HW, tel 81 771 2904, fax 81 653 0322.

Catholic Institute for International Relations, Unit 3, Canonbury Yard, 190a New North Road, London N1 7BJ, tel 71 354 0883, fax 71 359 0017.

UNITED STATES

East Timor Action Network, PO Box 1182, White Plains, NY 10602, tel 914 428 7299, fax 914 428 7383.

ACTION

Letter writing

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORTS: In meetings and correspondence with representatives of the Indonesian Government, Amnesty International reiterated its request to visit Indonesia and East Timor. The Government responded by asserting that it observed the rule of law and said Amnesty International should not interfere in Indonesia's domestic affairs. The following are just three cases which illustrate the situation.

Francisco Miranda Branco

A 41-year-old civil servant in Dili, East Timor, he was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. He had been convicted under Indonesia's sweeping Anti-Subversion Law. At the trial state prosecutors argued that subversion charges were warranted because the defendant had sought 'to give a wrong picture of the facts in East Timor to prove that the Indonesian Government did not respect human rights in the province'. Francisco Miranda Branco denied charges of subversion and stated before the court: 'I uphold the principles of non-violence and peace, which is why, after the outbreak of civil war in East Timor... I decided that... I would no longer take sides with any party... which is my position up to the present day.' He is one of eight people imprisoned for organizing or participating in the peaceful procession to the Santa Cruz cemetery.

They were also accused of membership of the 'Executive Committee', which had been created to deliver a petition to Portuguese parliamentarians scheduled to visit East Timor in October 1991. The petition reportedly appealed for a dialogue to be established between the Indonesian and Portuguese Governments and representatives of the East Timorese people. The terms of reference for the visit, agreed under the auspices of the United Nations, specified that all those wishing to make contact with the parliamentarians should be free to do so.

Domingos Segurado

One of the people massacred at the Santa Cruz cemetery. He was the sole surviving member of his family; his parents and brothers had all been killed by the Indonesian army. He was 28 when he died. Born in Ossu, a town in the region of Viqueque, he studied the Indonesian language at school and then trained as a teacher, qualifying in 1990. A reporter who witnessed the Santa Cruz massacre met him some two months earlier, and remembers him as 'above all an extremely gentle man'. Domingos helped the reporter to make contacts with priests and activists in the non-violent resistance, of which he was a member.

The two men lost contact with each other for several weeks when Domingos went into hiding after hearing that the army was looking for him. They met again on the morning of the massacre while the procession was assembling. As people unfurled their pro-independence banners and the procession began, Domingos said to the reporter: 'You must report everything'. The reporter last saw Domingos Segurado as the procession entered the Santa Cruz cemetery. Fifteen minutes later Indonesian soldiers opened fire on the marchers. Write to the President of Indonesia. Say that you have read about the political killing of Domingos Segurado. Urge that it be fully and impartially investigated and that those responsible be brought to justice.

Gaspar Luis Xavier Carlos

A bank employee living in Kupang, West Timor, he was arrested on 3 September 1992. He subsequently 'disappeared' and his family fear he has been killed. He was one of dozens of East Timorese political activists arrested in August and September 1992. These arrests followed the detention on 19 August of another political activist, Agostinho Pereira, who may have been tortured to reveal names. Agostinho Pereira was one of 10 activists who fled East Timor in the first half of 1992 to escape military harassment following the Dili massacre of November 1991.

After leaving East Timor, some of the 10 are understood to have gone into hiding in Kupang, West Timor, where they may have stayed with Gaspar Luis Xavier Carlos. Seven of them sought protection in the Finnish and Swedish embassies in Jakarta in June 1993. The military raided Gaspar Luis Xavier Carlos' house just hours after Agostinho Pereira was taken into custody, but he managed to evade arrest. Two weeks later, however, he was picked up and apparently held incommunicado in Colmera Prison, Dili.

PLEASE SEND LETTERS HIGHLIGHTING THESE CASES TO: ***President Suharto, Instana Negara, Jakarta, Indonesia.***

PENNY TWEEDIE

Also worth reading on East Timor...

A traveller's dictionary in Tetun-English and English-Tetun from the Land of the Sleeping Crocodile: East Timor, by Cliff Morris, Baba Dook Books, Melbourne, 1992.

Death in Dili, by Andrew McMillan, Hodder and Stoughton, Sydney, 1992.

FUNU: The unfinished saga of East Timor, by Jose Ramos-Horta, The Red Sea Press, Trenton, New Jersey, 1987.

Telling – East Timor: personal stories 1942-1992, by Michele Turner, NSW University Press, Sydney, 1992.

The Indonesian occupation of East Timor 1974-1989: a chronology, by John Taylor, Catholic Institute for International Relations, London, 1990.

Timor, a people betrayed, by James Dunn, The Jacaranda Press, Queensland, 1983.

TAPOL Bulletin, (bi-monthly) from TAPOL, 111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW, UK.

Timor Link, c/o CIIR, Unit 3, Canonbury Yard, 190A New North Road, London N1 7BJ.

Indonesia's forgotten war: the hidden history of East Timor, by John Taylor, Zed Books, London and Pluto Press, Sydney, 1991.

MEXICO – SPECIAL REPORT

DAVID RANSOM

Neglect in rural Chiapas: *Solidaridad* ('Solidarity') programme brings crumbs from the Federal President, not equity and justice.

Viva Zapata?

Uprising breaks the surface

The mountain roads of Chiapas, southern Mexico, weave through an ancient rural landscape of great beauty and apparent tranquillity. In September last year, enthralled by the grace of the place and its people, I motored gently around in a Volkswagen Beetle. Now gun battles and helicopters have left a trail of slaughter and grief.

The insurgency began on New Year's Day, to coincide with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It drew to a close with hundreds of dead, six major population centres temporarily occupied by the insurgents and the release from local jails of 179 prisoners whom the army had arrested during land disputes.

Rumour suggested that politicized refugees from the conflict in neighbouring Guatemala lay behind the uprising. But despite occasional skirmishes, the Mexican Army had been keen to deny the existence of organized opposition. The previously obscure Zapatista Army of National Liberation – named after the Mexican revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata – seems to have been able, nonetheless, to mobilize as many as 2,000 armed peasants across a wide area of the state. Slogans painted by insurgents on walls in San Cristóbal de las Casas read: 'And they said we did not exist!'

Every effort was made in official circles both inside and outside Mexico to dismiss the insurgency as an anachronistic outburst in a uniquely impoverished region of the country. It is true that indigenous people form the majority of the population in Chiapas, and this is unusual in Mexico. It is also true that the population is largely rural, which is equally untypical now that most Mexicans live in the cities. The mountainous terrain and lack of modern communications – one result of government neglect – also make Chiapas particularly suitable for guerrilla activity.

But there is no question that events here have a much wider resonance throughout the country. There are for a start more than seven million indigenous people elsewhere in Mexico who also experience discrimination and injustice.

The crisis in Mexican rural life, exacerbated by cheap grain imports from the US under NAFTA, has also been caused by a return to the old system of huge landed estates and unfettered power for landowners that provoked the outbreak of revolution in 1910. It is mirrored in Mexico's industrial cities, where low wages, cuts in social programmes and spiralling unemployment have created mass destitution alongside the fourth largest number of dollar billionaires in the world. Extreme poverty, as bad as anything I have seen in Latin America, is common even in the booming industrial cities of the US/Mexico border.

The Government's response has generally been to declare such grievances to be non-existent. Much attention has focused on the authoritarian nature of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) which has been in power since 1928. But since 1982 the PRI has abandoned almost every principle it originally stood for. It is this *volte face* – away from a tradition of state intervention towards free-market policies – that has produced deep divisions in Mexican society.

There is an unresolved paradox. The sophisticated machinery of a 'revolutionary' statist government is now being used to implement policies that in many respects resemble what the Revolution was against.

Meanwhile, in what may well prove to have been the most serious armed uprising since the Revolution, the army has once again entered the arena. In Chiapas it has for years intervened on the side of the local power élite. But after a massacre of students before the Olympics in Mexico City in 1968 the army largely withdrew from acts of civil repression, in sharp contrast to the rise of military dictatorships elsewhere in Latin America. Human-rights activists in Mexico who were anticipating an end to authoritarian controls based on force may now have to think again.

One indication of the seriousness of the situation in Chiapas is that few people outside the indigenous groups now have any credibility with them at all. Don Samuel Ruiz – an immensely impressive, witty and compassionate man whom I interviewed last September – has been Bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas for the past 30 years and is often cited as someone who does have their trust. He has consistently defended indigenous rights in the face of blatant discrimination and threats against his own life.

He now has the extraordinarily difficult task of mediating between the army and the insurgents, a role that will be crucial if the slaughter is not to continue and spread. The Vatican, however, under pressure from the conservative hierarchy of the Mexican Catholic Church, accused him last November of 'grave pastoral doctrinal errors' and urged him to step down. Don Samuel has written to the Vatican asking to be allowed to defend himself. His supporters worldwide are doing the same.

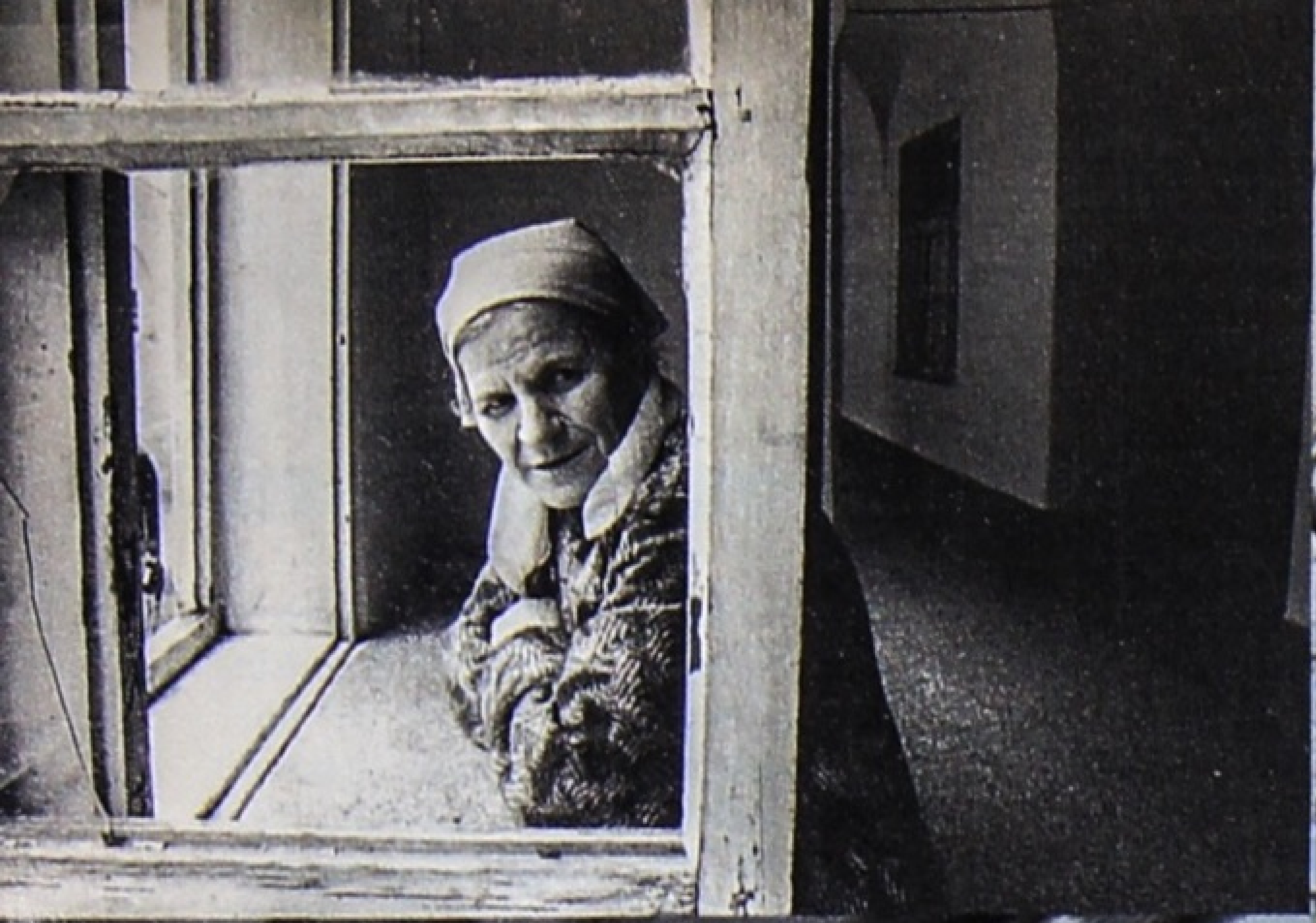
DAVID RANSOM

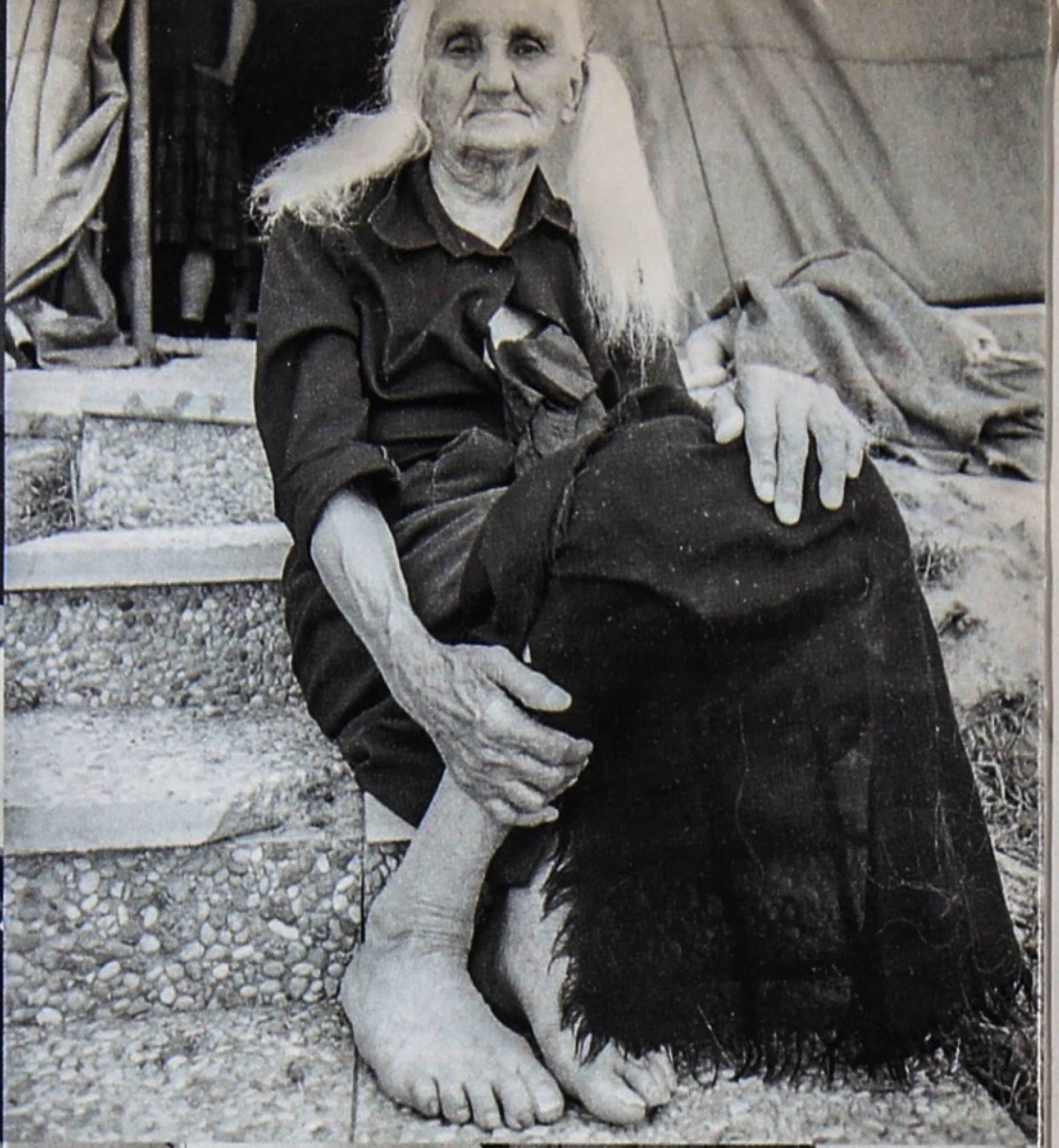
Much-maligned mediator Samuel Ruiz.

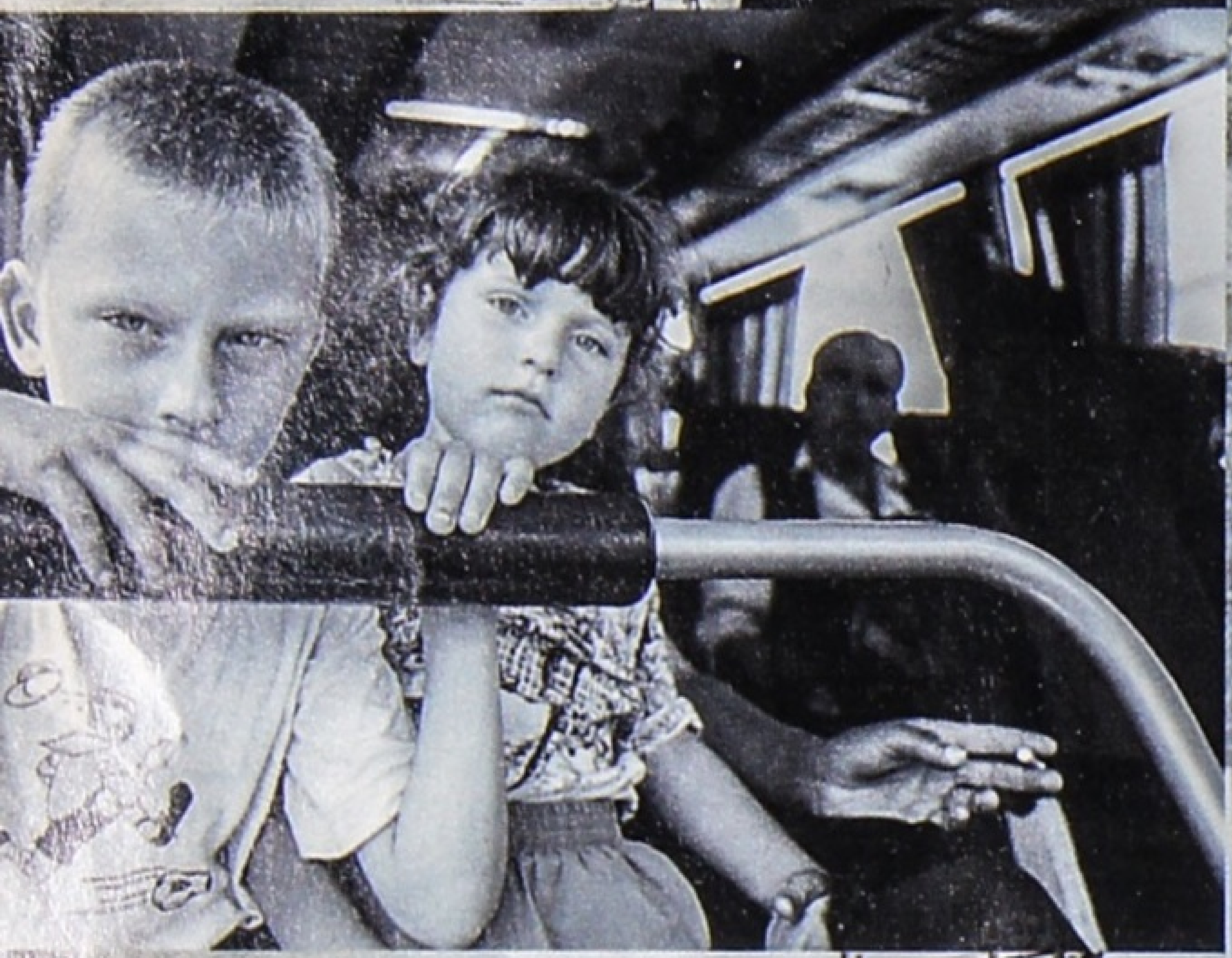
The political 'hot season' in Mexico leading up to presidential elections in August has become several degrees hotter. It is impossible to predict how events might now develop. But one thing is certain. The complacency that led some people to dismiss the significance of the uprising, and others to discount wider opposition to the economic and political orthodoxy behind NAFTA, has been shown up for what it was. The brutal fact is that it still takes the bloodshed of the dispossessed to do it. ■

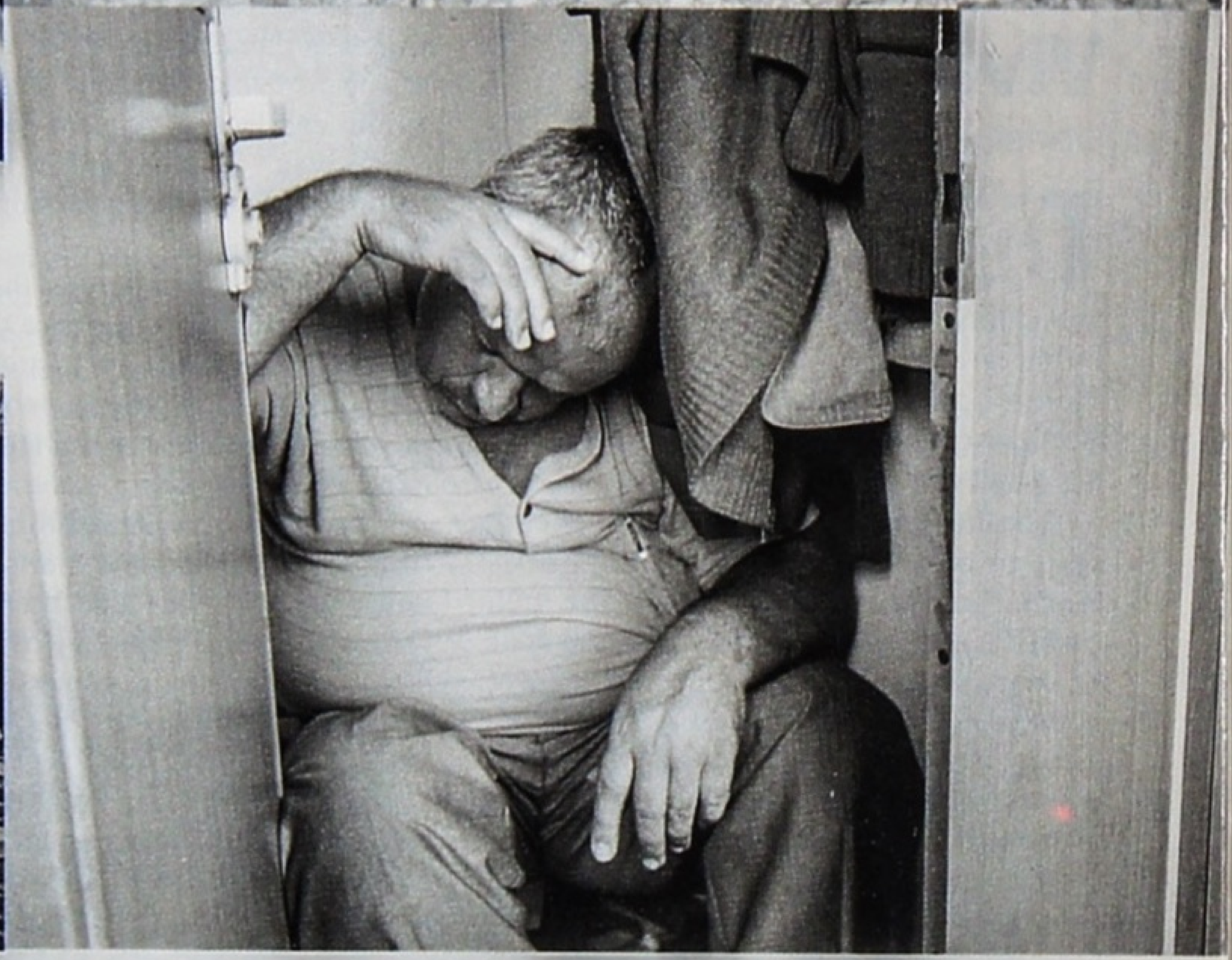
David Ransom

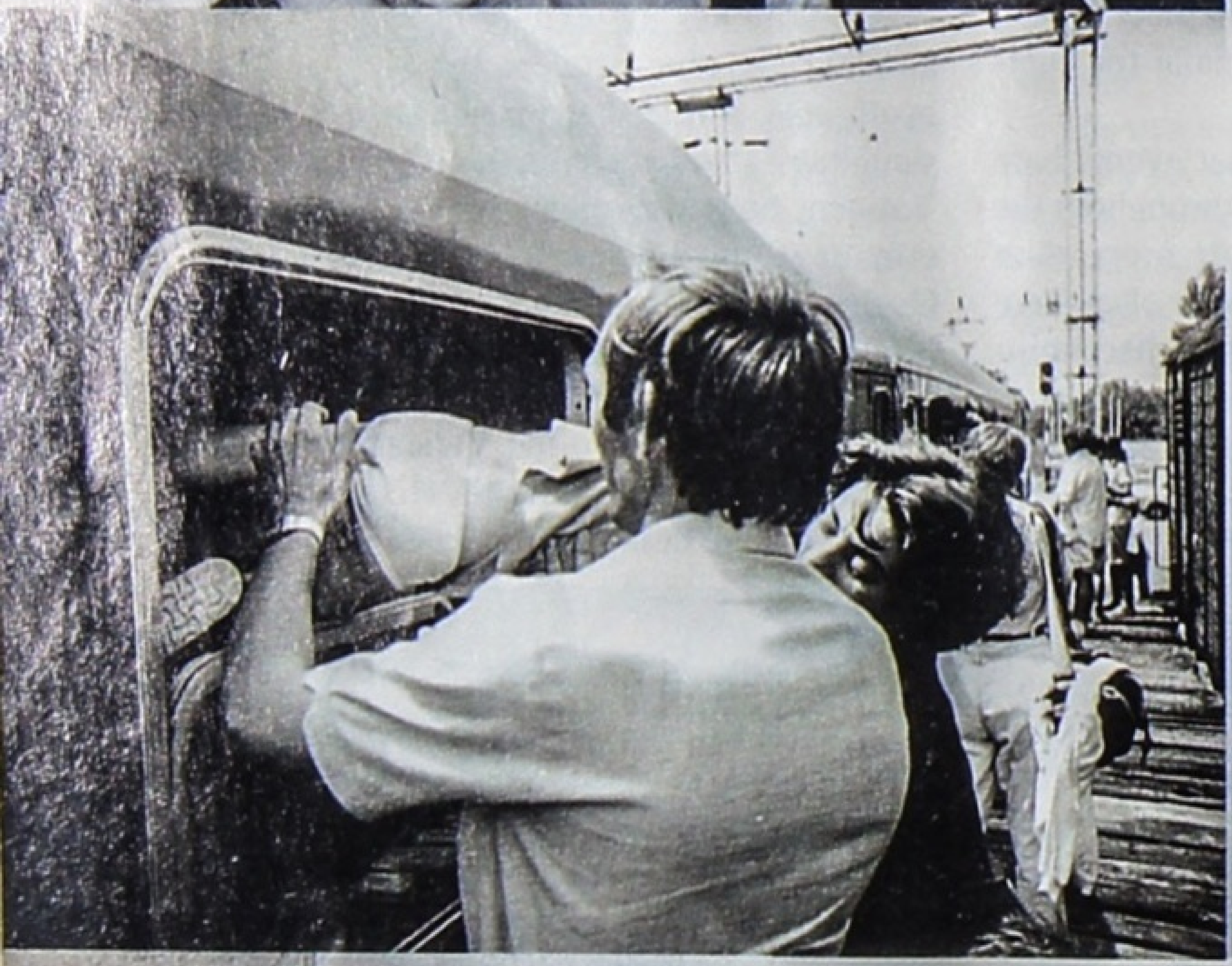
For more background information, and an interview with Don Samuel Ruiz, see **NI 251**, January 1994, particularly pages 20-23.

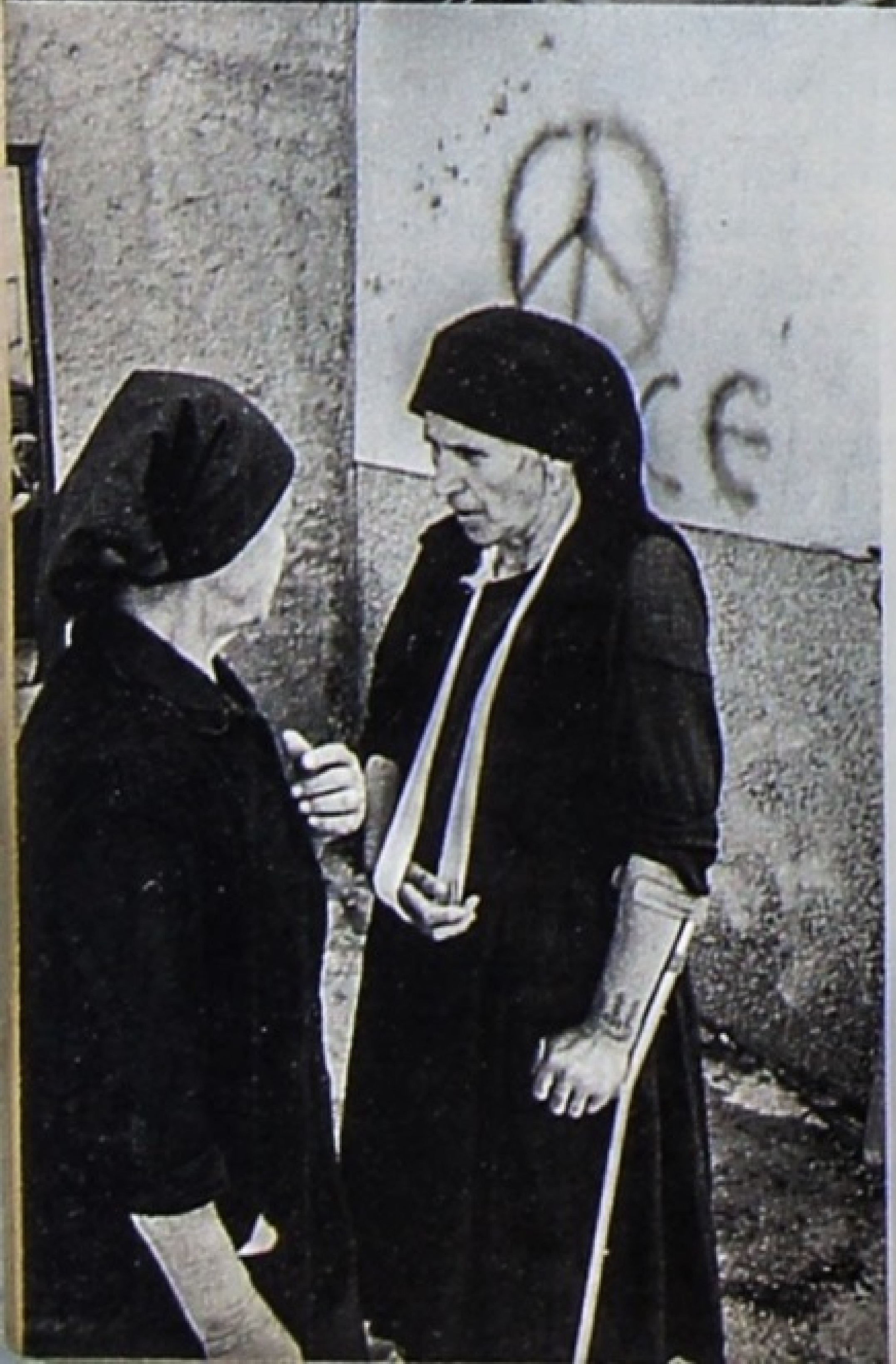












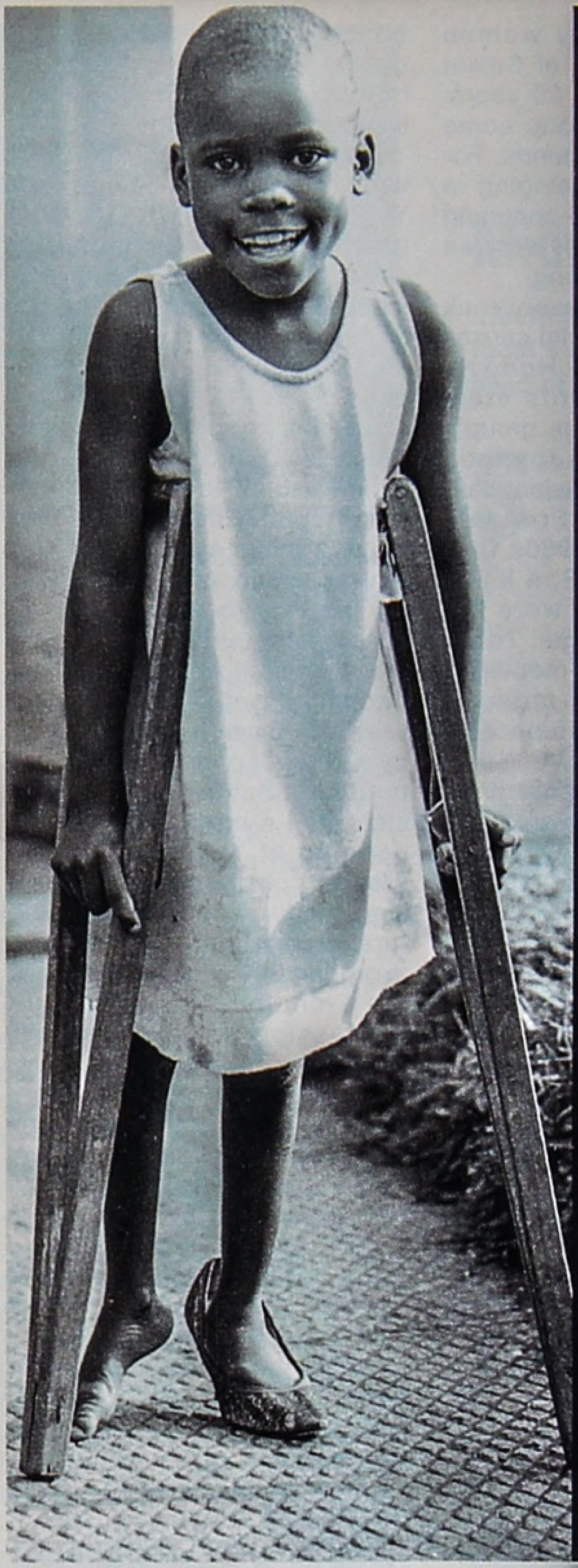
From top left anti-clockwise (names are pseudonyms at the request of those photographed): **Mita, a Muslim refugee in a Muslim UNHCR refugee centre in the Croatian town of Karlovac – she was 'ethnically cleansed' by Serbian forces in Bosnia; two children from Bosnia among 3,000 refugees driven from their homes in Novi Travnik; Muslim refugees from Northern Bosnia being taken off trains outside Zagreb en route for Germany and Austria; Croatian women 'cleansed' by Muslims from Novi Travnik sheltering in a sports hall in Caplina; overcrowded trains taking people from Bosnia; Mara remembers both the World Wars – this is the first time she has been driven from her home.**

Catalogue of resolve

Photographs by Lloyd Cederstrand, who writes: Working in Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1992 strengthened my resolve to make the plight of these people known more clearly than it is through the sensationalist images that bombard us from newspapers and television.

I returned in 1993 with a grant from the Canada Arts Council. What I witnessed has yet to be fully sorted out in my mind. The physical and emotional havoc of war is great, yet the strength and resolve of these people amazed me. Over two million people are now displaced within ex-Yugoslavia. Many thousands have gone by train to centres in Italy, Switzerland and Germany, where they are often confronted by prejudice, hatred and resentment. ■

HEALTH



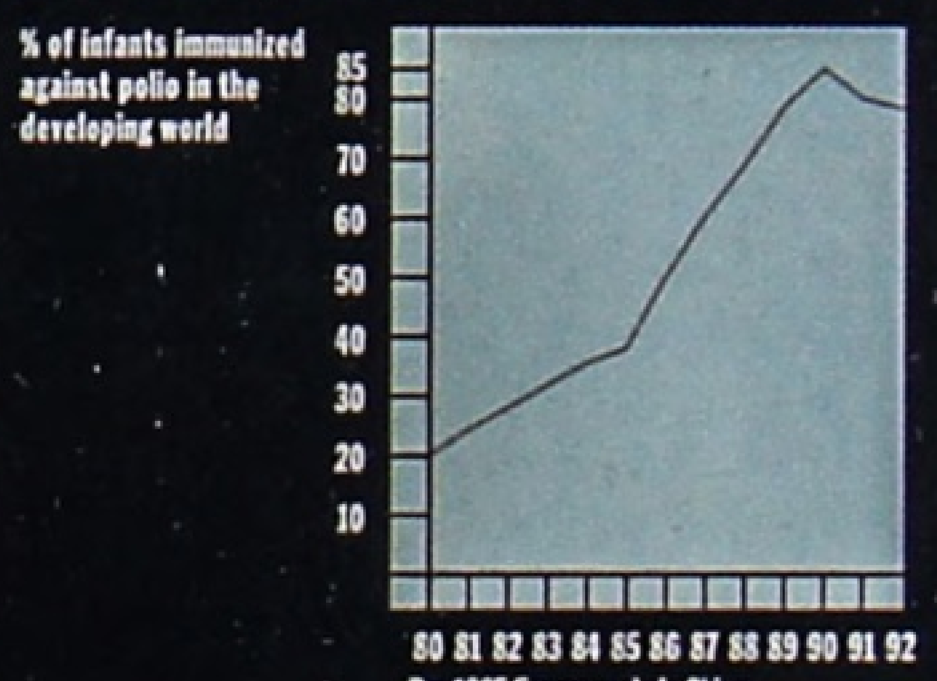
Source: UNICEF, State of the World's Children 1994.

POLIO

FAILING AT THE LAST?

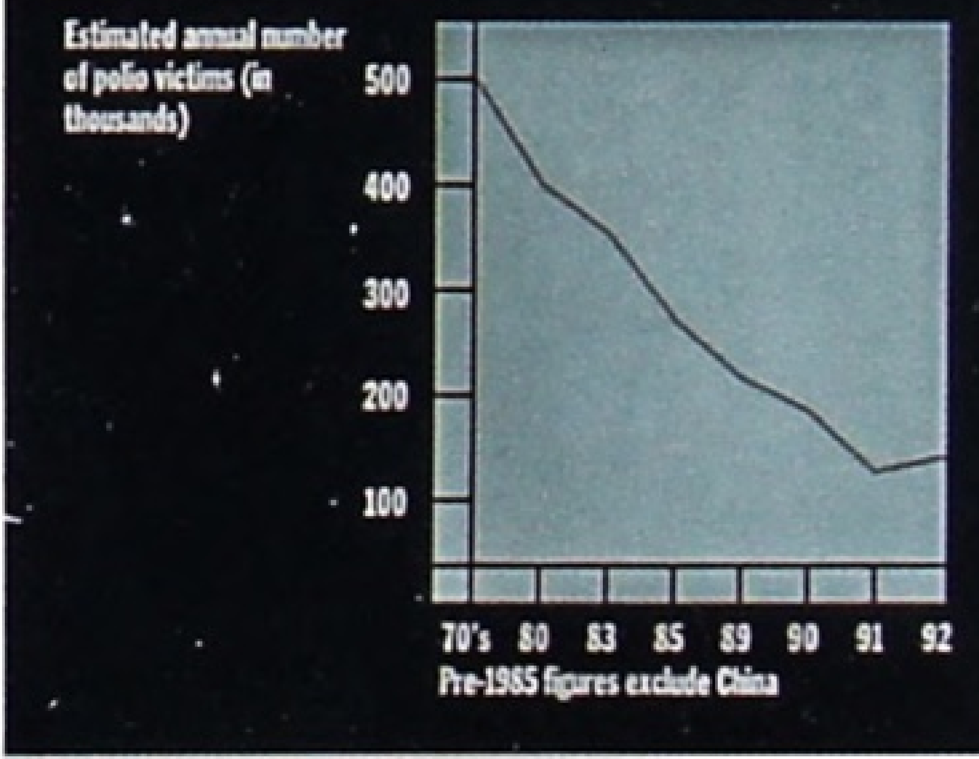
A ten-year effort has taken polio immunization to 80% of the world's children and reduced polio cases from 400,000 a year to 140,000. There have been no new cases of polio in the western hemisphere for the last two years, and polio-free zones are now also being carved out in Europe and in some parts of Africa and the Middle East. Eradication of the virus is possible by the end of the century. But there are signs that the effort may now be flagging in the home stretch. UNICEF and the World Health Organization are reporting slight falls in polio immunization in some countries.

THE RISE OF IMMUNIZATION



Pre-1985 figures exclude China

THE FALL OF POLIO

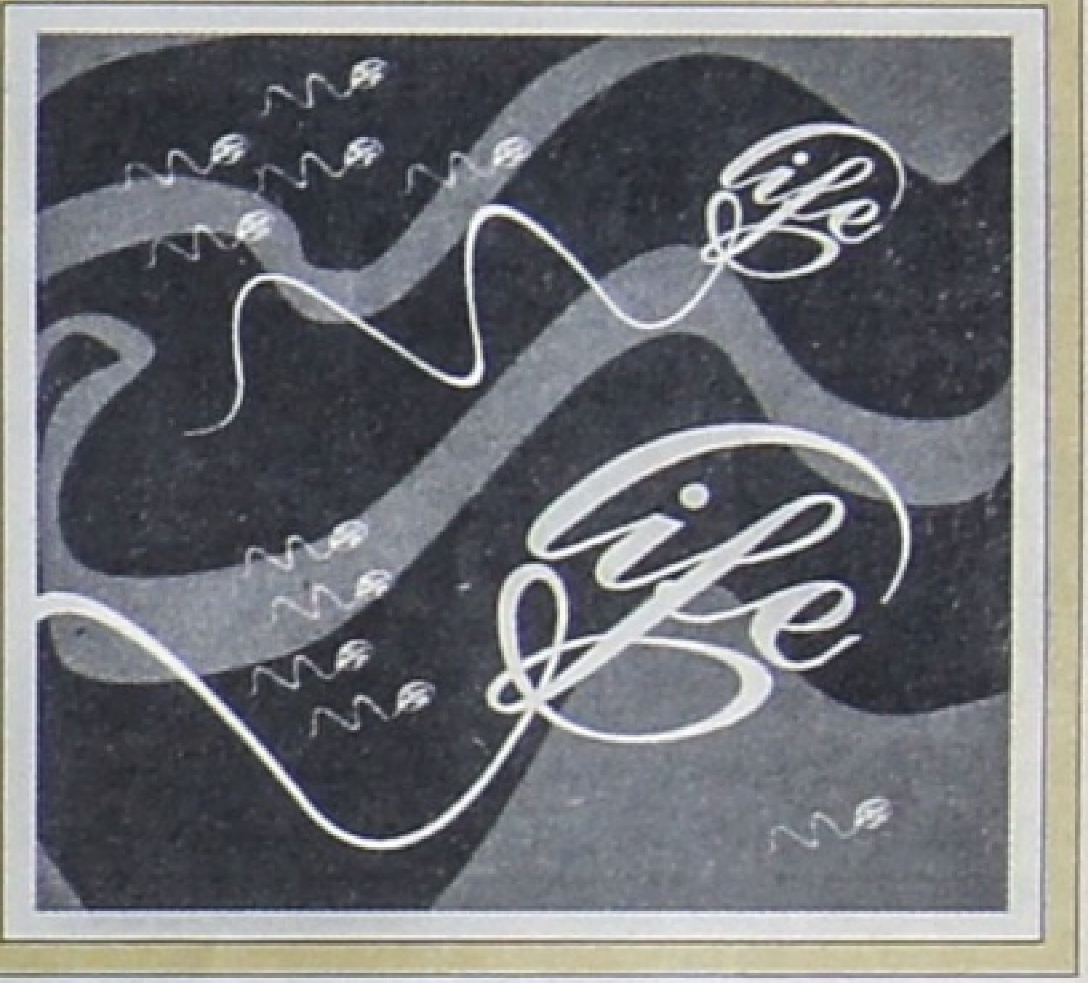


Pre-1985 figures exclude China

Swimming into the pink

Men will be able to check how fertile they are with a home testing kit that goes on sale this year in the Netherlands. Adapted from a test used to check the fertility of bulls, it uses a dye which changes from deep purple in the presence of oxygen to pale pink when the oxygen falls below a certain level. Vigorous sperm burn up oxygen as they swim, so a sample of semen containing a large enough number of active sperm will change colour after a short time. It is hoped that the test will relieve many women of the distress of undergoing unpleasant investigations, by making it easier for men to check out their contribution to conception first.

New Scientist, No 1907.



Ghost in the machine

Doordarshan, the Indian government television network, is better known for ensuring a good night's sleep due to its anodyne programming than as a source of entertainment. But sometimes its gaffes can be quite exciting. Consider this – recently a well-known Hindi film was broadcast, but in a bizarrely re-edited format because orders came down to remove one of the main actors, now a spokesperson for an opposition party. His lines could be heard, but as if delivered by a phantom because his face was never seen in the film.

Michael Urlocker/Gemini News Service

The rickshaw capital

The main streets and alleyways of Dhaka throng with pedal-powered cycle rickshaws. They are the bane of transport planners and drivers of motorized vehicles. But every day over 300,000 of these wobbly contraptions shift more than seven million passengers to their destinations, 70 per cent of Dhaka's commuters. Dhaka is easily the rickshaw capital of the world and the Government is fighting a losing battle trying to limit numbers. Cycle rickshaws have carved out a niche for themselves in the national economy, contributing 34 per cent of the transport sector earnings of the country, twice the contribution of the national airline Biman.

India Today, Vol 18, No 24.

MARK EDWARDS

END

END Quote Quote

'We can live without a president, but we can't live without farmers.'

A sign held up among the 6,000 South Korean students protesting against President Kim Young Sam's decision to open the country's rice market to imports as part of GATT. (During his election campaign, Kim had promised not to take such a step.)

Courting controversy with transgressive sexuality.

film

Farewell my concubine

directed by **Chen Kaige**

In 1984 Beijing-born director Chen Kaige's debut film *Yellow Earth* heralded a new era for Chinese cinema – the 'Fifth generation' of filmmakers who were openly critical of the country's recent history. *Yellow Earth* won awards internationally but was vilified at home. The Communist Party leaders denounced the film for its portrayal of the country's 'poverty and backwardness'. Ten years and five films on, Kaige still courts controversy. **Farewell My Concubine** could only be screened in China after some judicial pruning. The objections this time have to do with the fact that the film deals with homosexuality.

Certainly Kaige and the screenwriter Lilian Lee, upon whose novel the film is based, are charting new ground and touching on desires that have been previously stifled in China. But it is ironical that Kaige deals with it in terms of China's oldest artistic tradition, the Beijing Opera – founded anyway on sexual ambiguity given that the women's roles are always played by men. Unfurling like an ornately embroidered tapestry, this epic sweep of a film covers 50 years, tracing the turbulent relations between two Opera stars, Dieyi (Leslie Cheung) and Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi), and the prostitute Juxian (Gong Li) whom Xiaolou eventually marries. The two men meet in the 1920s as children at the brutal and austere Opera Academy and Dieyi becomes infatuated with Xiaolou. They survive the Japanese invasion in 1937, the communist revolution in 1949 and the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.

History infects the protagonists' lives, no more so than during the Cultural Revolution when they are pushed to denounce each other – Juxian for her 'shady' past as prostitute and Dieyi for his 'homosexual crimes'.

Provoking questions about friendship and loyalty that only those who have lived under authoritarian regimes will ever know how to answer, **Farewell my Concubine** is a monumental film as vivid as the operas that counterpoint the engrossing drama.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

books

We Who Believe in Freedom: Sweet Honey in the Rock... still on the journey

by **Bernice Johnson Reagon** and **Sweet Honey in the Rock** (Anchor Books / Doubleday 1993.)

Sweet Honey in the Rock, an American women's acapella sextet, offers music of such intensity and fervour that many listeners feel suspended in a state of near swoon. So it's hard to talk about the group without resorting to pulpit style exhortations. If you haven't heard Sweet Honey, you'd better run out and get a recording.

We Who Believe in Freedom is a collection of essays by the many women who have been part of Sweet Honey over the past 20 years. The women in the group come from diverse backgrounds. For all of them, though, singing in Sweet Honey is a life-changing experience and their stories make fascinating reading.

While just about every rock star is dabbling in social causes these days, Sweet Honey's political commitments stem from deeper roots. The group's founder Bernice Johnson Reagon found her musical calling as one of the Freedom Singers during the 1960s Civil Rights movement. She knew early on that songs were the essence of the struggle. These were the words that mobilized people; that offered strength and solace and a vision of a better time to come.

Altogether, this book offers affecting testimonials to the extraordinary power of Sweet Honey, a group whose politically-engaged and spiritually-charged music is not just entertainment but medicine for the soul.

(This book is currently only available in the US and Canada but seven Sweet Honey in the Rock albums, including *Breath* and *Good News*, are available on the Cooking Vinyl label.)

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

Singing in Sweet Honey – a life-changing experience.

The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracing the Break-up

by **Branka Magas**
(Verso ISBN 086091 593X)

The past 20 months have seen around two million Bosnian Muslims threatened with Europe's first genocide since the Second World War, their homeland darkened by massacre, rape and terror.

But Magas argues that it is wrong to see violence in former Yugoslavia as the result of a long-term hatred between Croats, Muslims and Serbs forced to coexist temporarily under communism. These old 'nationalisms' are recent fabrications, used by corrupt governments opposed to political pluralism and whose fear inclines them to control rather than reform. Ethnic hatred thus plays a minor part and opportunism a major one.

The twin themes of a fabricated past and a propagandized present recur throughout the book, itself a product of 12 years of research, characterized by a breadth of history and solid political analysis. It becomes clear that a major factor in the undoing of Yugoslavia is the silencing of dissent and opposition, media control, and the cultural production of paranoia. It is propaganda which has fuelled the chain reactions of aggression and vengeance, entrenched through manipulated news broadcasts on local stations. Such propaganda has been regularly linked with the deliberate arming of extremist paramilitaries.

Magas's is a melancholy voice, not a strident one, as she unravels the appalling story of how this conflict came not from below but was imposed from above.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆

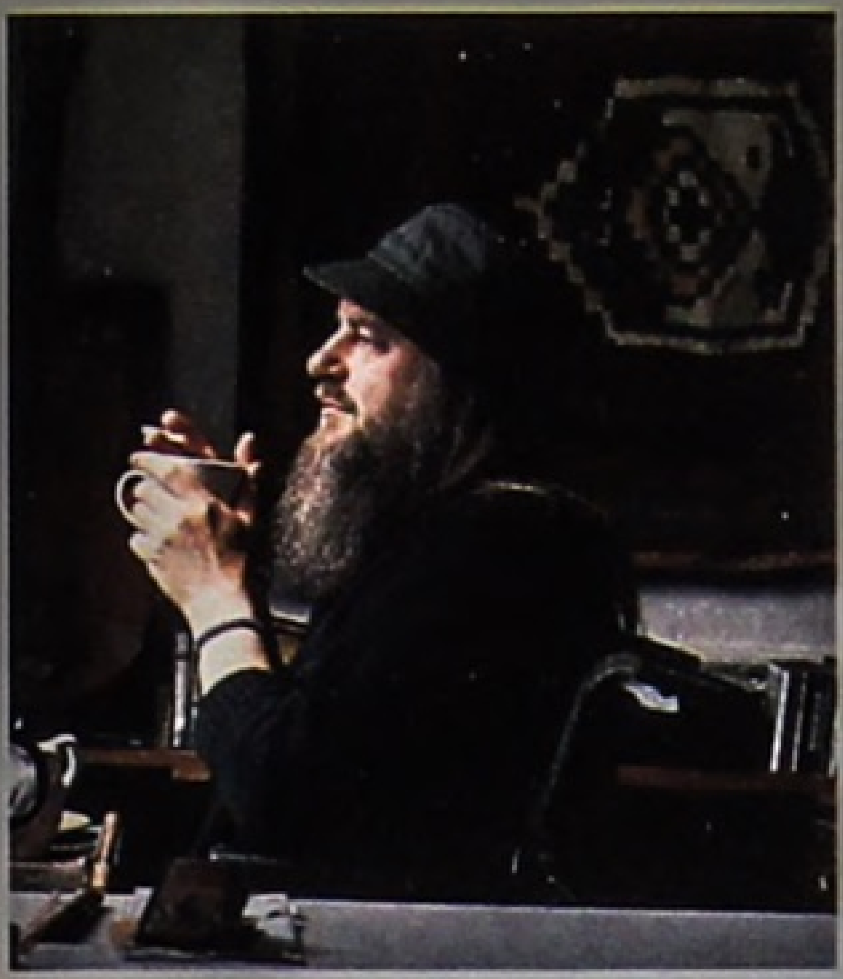
music

Nothing Can Stop Us

by **Robert Wyatt** (Rough Trade R3092 CD)

It has never been easy to classify Robert Wyatt. He is remembered for his work with Soft Machine in the 1960s, for cameos with Jimi Hendrix and in recent years as an incisive songwriter whose humanitarian brand of communism imbues every song. **Nothing Can Stop Us** is a collection of 11 tracks, all of which appeared during 1980-81.

This re-release is a gem. Its ten songs and one poem celebrate the folk song in its most



Wyatt: humble and reflective.

unadorned splendour, stressing its mixed function of protest, communication and praise.

Certain songs, typically the workers' anthem *Red Flag,* may have stronger claims to being mass songs as opposed to folk songs. While another, the disco hit *At Last I'm Free* seems at first glance a whimsical inclusion. But in Wyatt's hands the idea of 'freedom' becomes a fragile goal that requires nurturing, and is a statement about personal politics as much as social relations.

This balance between the personal and the political holds the album together. For many years, Wyatt has been a card-carrying Communist Party member and his awareness of historical process is reflected in his overtly political songs, many of which were written 30, 40 or 50 years ago.

Trade Union, written by the London-based Bengali group Dishari, brings us up to date. With a ripple of *tabla*, Abdus Salique launches into a delicately woven vocal line exhorting Bengalis to unite against racism under the union banner. The message is firmly directed towards Asians living in the East End of London and combating virulent racism on a daily basis.

Such subject matter is not a bundle of laughs. Many musicians would be unable to lighten these songs away from a didactic or hectoring delivery. Wyatt's great strength lies in his simple, clear voice: there is nothing pompous or saintly or worthy about him. In fact, the keynote of the album is that of humility and reflection.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

THE *classic*

Midnight's Children

...being the book that linked independent India's birthpangs with the personal lives of a handful of its people

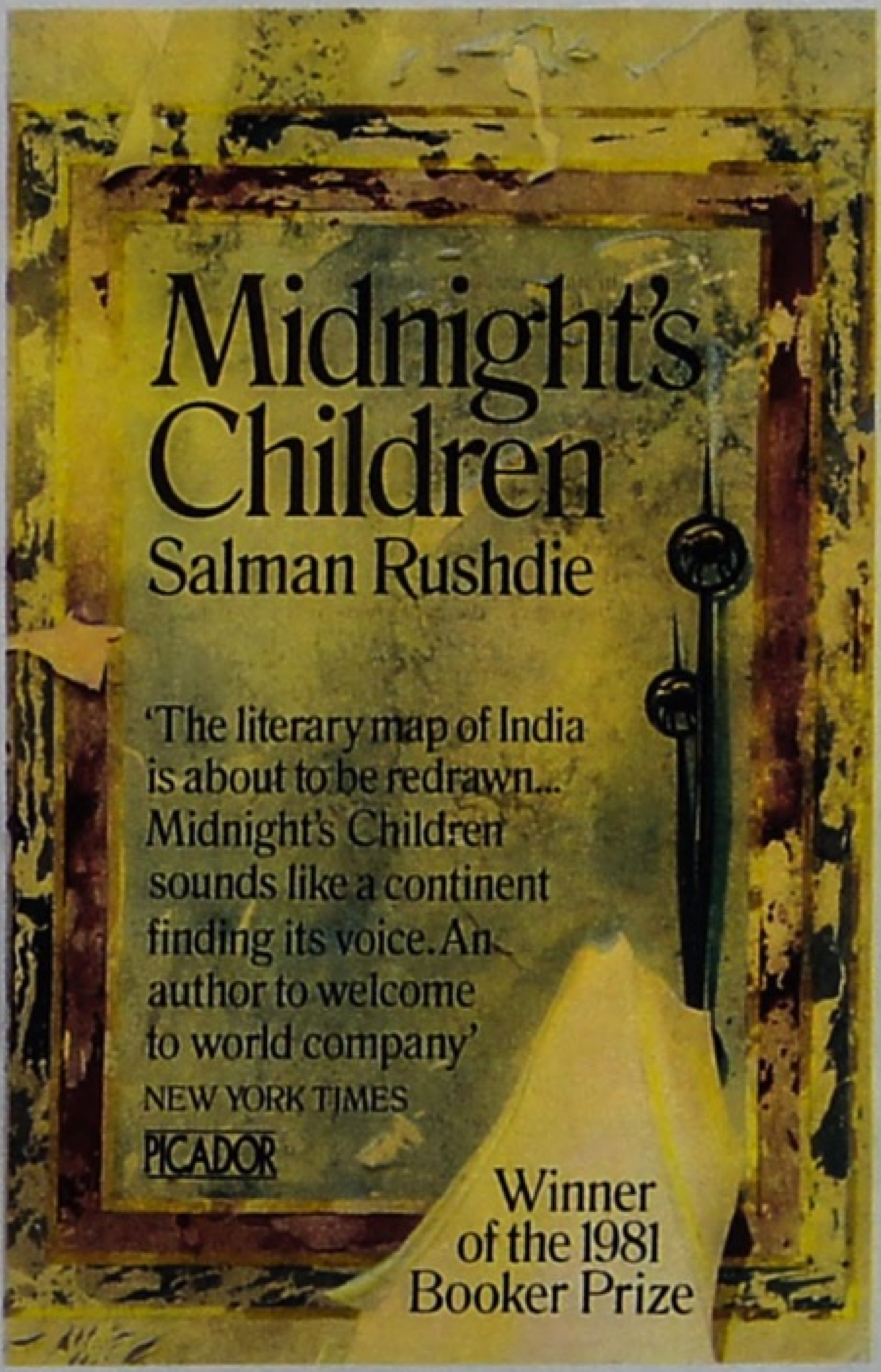
SALMAN RUSHDIE'S **Midnight's Children** was published in 1981 when the Western world had taken a shift to the Right, and its fiction writers seemed to be producing mainly stylish but anodyne, apolitical stuff which appeared to have no other purpose than to entertain a comfortable middle class.

For me, **Midnight's Children** was a breath of fresh air. At last here was a writer who had produced a work that dared show that the everyday lives of 'ordinary' citizens of a country are inextricably bound up with grander national politics.

The novel tells the story of a group of children who were all born on the day that the 'new' independent nation of India came into existence in 1947. The hero – if hero be the right word – of the novel is Saleem. Together with another boy, Shiva, he is born exactly on the stroke of midnight, thus winning acclaim from the Prime Minister and a prize from *The Times of India* for being a symbol of the nascent state. Saleem discovers that he, along with other children born on Independence Day, has telepathic powers. He founds an alternative Congress consisting of all these children.

The Congress is able to function on a telepathic level and Rushdie portrays it as a mirror image of the real Indian Congress, including all the petty wrangles and pointless prejudices of the politicians of the day. Saleem seeks to impose his ideas of a moral and decent India upon his fellow children.

Shiva, on the other hand, believes only in the survival of the fittest. The two boys fall into a Manichean – good against evil – struggle. The children's Congress collapses amid recriminations and accusations of élitism. Rushdie's subtle irony and wide-ranging criticism of power politics becomes apparent.


Midnight's Children
Salman Rushdie
'The literary map of India is about to be redrawn... Midnight's Children sounds like a continent finding its voice. An author to welcome to world company'
NEW YORK TIMES
PICADOR
Winner of the 1981 Booker Prize

Few works convey so magnificently just how the corrupt and corrupting policies of major figures filter through to the lives of the populace. In this single novel Rushdie encompasses the aspirations of a new nation and the horrors that stem from the unimaginative, internecine antics of an élite group of politicians. It was these politicians who were ultimately responsible for the interminable wars with Pakistan, pervasive corruption and the dictatorial attitudes adopted by the tragicomic Gandhi dynasty. It should surprise no-one that Indira Gandhi had the book banned when it first came out.

But Rushdie is no pessimist. What shines through the novel is the indomitable spirit of the Indian people. Saleem comes to symbolize not only the new nation, but citizenship itself. No matter how corrupt are politicians and absurd the aims they represent, the people survive.

Ultimately Saleem travels from his hometown of Bombay to the jungles of Bengal as part of a secret army expeditionary force and confronts Shiva.

At the conclusion of **Midnight's Children**, Saleem simply wishes to throw off the oppressive yoke of his mystical powers and lead a normal life as a simple citizen. This seemed to me to fit with the aspirations of a great many people in the West in the early 1980s. As they strove to go about their everyday lives, to bring up their children, to pay off their debts, the selfish and distorted policies of an elected dictatorship prevented these things.

And like early post-Independence India, the Thatcher and Reagan ideologies were still in a formative state. Who could have envisaged the disintegration of the Welfare State or the ruinous economic policies which would lead to large-scale unemployment?

At that time Salman Rushdie brought home to me that there was at least one novelist who was attempting to blow the trumpet for the less advantaged and the dispossessed – and in so doing he produced a masterpiece. ■

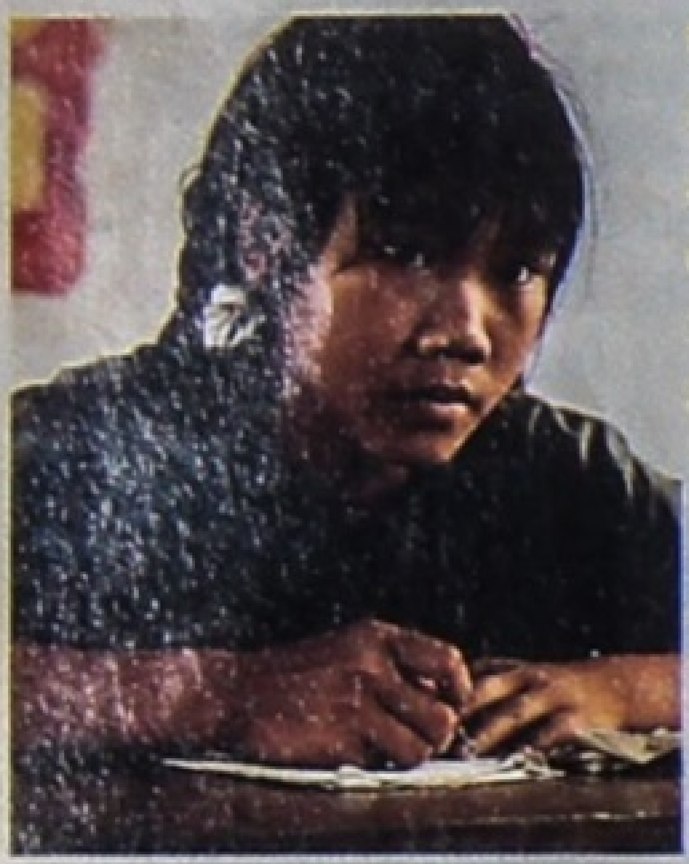
Jeffrey Lamb

Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie *(Penguin, 1981)*

QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. Please address your answers and questions to 'Curiosities'.

Do cultures where characters are used instead of letters have an alphabet? And how do they use dictionaries?



CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

Chinese dictionaries may be arranged in either of two ways. First, by classification of 'radicals' – the base strokes for characters. These may form a simple character themselves or be part of a more complex character. If the latter, they mark the class of things to which the particular character belongs: trees will have a 'wood' radical, liquids a 'water' radical, and so on. Chinese children are taught this classification, which is used in monolingual dictionaries. There are 300 radicals or primary characters.

The second is to be found in modern bilingual dictionaries. The Chinese half is ordered alphabetically by the character's pin-yin equivalents – pin-yin being the phonetic rendering of characters. It still helps to be able to recognize the character, however, since Chinese has a limited phonetic structure and so has a large number of homophones. Xin can mean 'hard', 'zinc', 'new' 'firewood' and 'happy' – all of which are pronounced the same, but each of which has its own character.

Ricky Lowes
London, UK

I've heard that it is possible to get a covenant cheque book which can be used for gifts to charities and allows the recipient organization to get a full tax reclaim. Is this so?

In addition to the answer in **NI 252** you can get one from the Charities Aid Foundation, 48 Pembury Road, Tonbridge Kent TN9 2JD, UK. All you have to do is sign a covenant to them, then you can make out cheques from this account to any registered charity you wish.

Iona Binns
Balerno, Scotland, UK

Which country or region of the world has been the most peaceful – free from both internal strife and involvement in external strife – during the past two centuries?

Greenland has a good claim. Its modern colonization – which started in the eighteenth century – was relatively peaceful. The indigenous inhabitants were not massacred, and native Greenlanders now make up 80 per cent of its population.

All the wars of the past 200 years have passed Greenland by, with the exception of the Second World War. The US had military bases there which played an important role in the protection of Allied naval transport across the Atlantic, but Greenland was never attacked.

There has been discontent at Denmark's treatment of Greenland, but it has been largely peaceful, and after 1945 Greenland succeeded in getting Denmark to fund an improved education and transport system. Full independence also came peacefully in 1979.

Mark Pack
York, UK

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

Can anyone explain to me why we have managed to have women prime ministers in India and Pakistan and still have deplorable treatment of women?

Ashoni Arora
Queensland, Australia

Has anyone published a list of products and services that can be bought without doing harm to babies, animals, human rights and so on?

Suzanne Britton
Stowmarket, UK

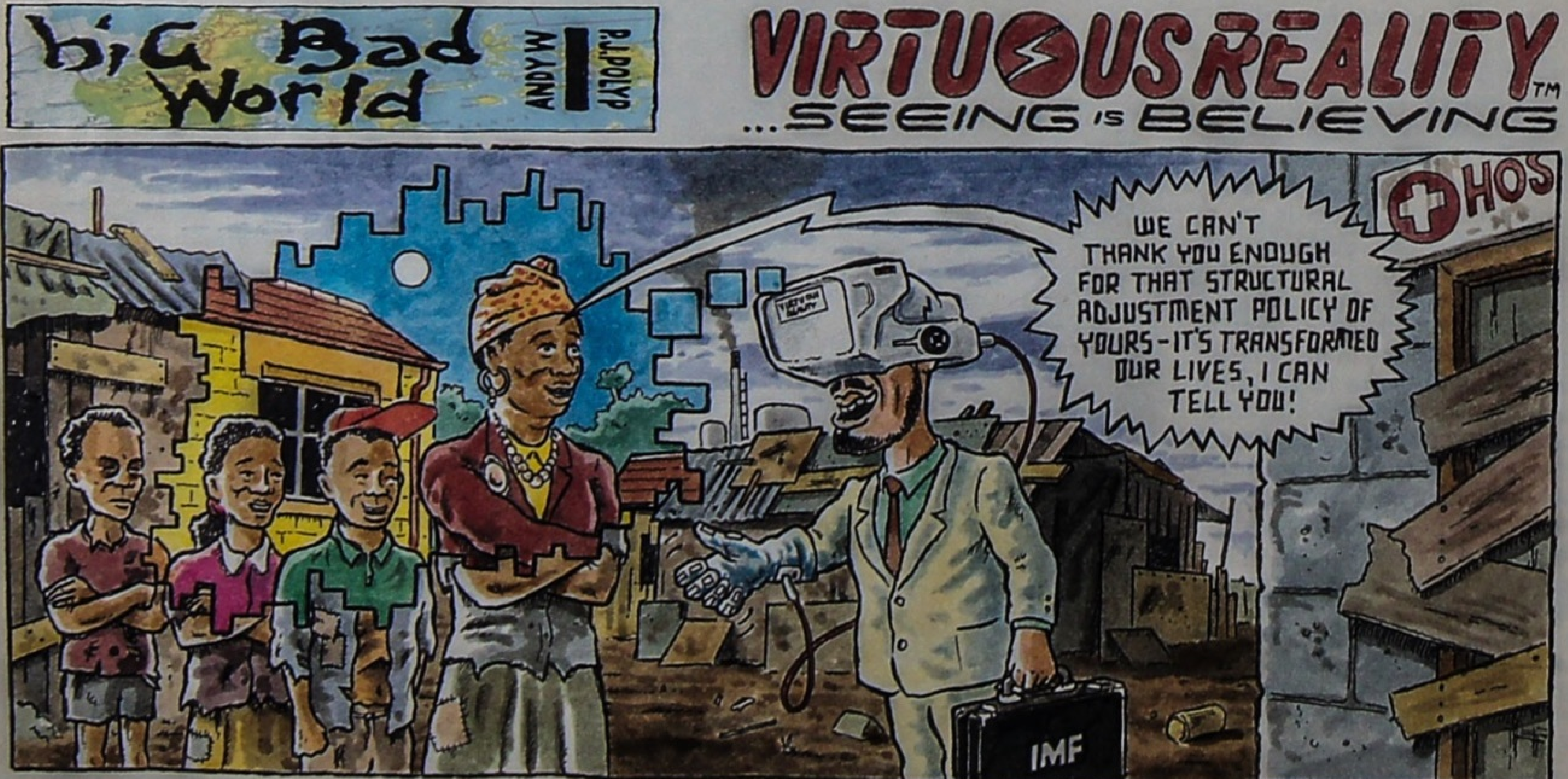
Where does the custom of knocking glasses together before we drink come from?

Patricia Plummer
Toshima-ku, Japann

What are the pros and cons of microwaves? Are they more or less environmenty-friendly than gas or electric stoves?

Andrew Young
Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

If you have any questions or answers please send them to Curiosities, **New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK,** or to your local **NI** office (see inside front cover for addresses).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WE CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR THAT STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT POLICY OF YOURS – IT'S TRANSFORMED OUR LIVES, I CAN TELL YOU!
IMF

Battle over, war begins

The battle against the brutal Mengistu regime in Ethiopia may be over, but for many of the women who fought in it the war for women's emancipation is only just beginning. ***Caroline Swinburne*** *reports on how women fighters learned from hard experience.*

THE view from the small plane as we approached the regional capital of Mekele was far from inviting. Mile after mile of sandy nothingness and strange misshapen rocky mountains reached to the horizon and it was difficult to see how anyone carved out a life in this arid wilderness. The man sitting beside me said that just 30 years ago the hillsides of Ethiopia's northern province of Tigray were covered with trees; now this war-torn, deforested land showed only too clearly the effects of decades of rebellion against the brutal regime of President Mengistu Haile Mariam.

Ex-fighters Aragesh Adada and Roman take it easy.

CAROLINE SWINBURNE

The war is now over, Mengistu has fled to Zimbabwe and efforts at regeneration have begun – but life in Tigray is still a struggle. As so often happens when life gets tough, it is women who bear the brunt of the problems – it is they who must grind the grain, carry the water and firewood and, very often, help with the work in the fields as well.

When the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) started their rebellion against the Mengistu regime in the 1970s, many women realized that the rebels could offer them an alternative to a life of endless domestic drudgery. An adventurous few decided to join up. They cut their hair short, changed out of their traditional white shemmas into khaki battle gear, left their husbands and fathers and set off for the front to eat, live, sleep and fight alongside the men.

Roman is now a feminine and sophisticated woman in her late thirties; she was just 20 when she decided to join the army. 'At first my father didn't know where I'd gone – but eventually he heard I'd joined the war. To begin with he was very confused and worried, and he was quite sure I would be killed.'

She soon discovered that life as a fighter was unimaginably hard. The highlands of Ethiopia are renowned for their inaccessibility and travel here is normally on foot. Most people live on the plateaux on the tops of the mountains; to walk even to the next village can mean a day-long descent down one gorge and up the side of the next. The guns were heavy, the army was constantly on the move and the women fighters had little physical training.

At first their male comrades also found the new social order difficult. The women shared life in the field to the full but for the first 10 years of the war sexual relationships between fighters were forbidden. In 1986 the rules were changed to allow the women to marry and have children, but most refused the opportunity. For the first time in their lives they had developed a real sense of comradeship with their menfolk; many of the women felt that to revert to the role of housewife would be a serious setback. 'Personally I didn't want to have children because I believed that it would hinder my activity,' says ex-fighter Lichy.

As the war progressed the TPLF joined with other rebel groups to form a coalition, and by the late 1980s they held power in a significant area in the north of the country. Here they started to introduce their own legislation which rewarded women for their war efforts by a change in the marriage laws. 'Basic to women's equality was raising the minimum age of marriage,' says British writer Jenny Hammond, who lived with the fighters in the field during part of the war. 'In the old days women in Tigray were often pressed into marriage when they were as young as seven years old. But under the TPLF the age limit was first raised to 12 and then 15 and in some areas it is now 18.'

In June 1992 the war was finally won and the coalition of rebel fighters came to metropolitan Addis Ababa, where they now form the new transitional government. Now the euphoria of winning the war is fading a little, they are discovering that it is far from easy to interest women who live in the south of the country in ideas of female emancipation.

During the Mengistu era the whole idea of women's rights developed many unpleasant connotations. 'Under the last regime we had a National Organization for Women,' explains Addis Ababa resident Gemanesh Solomon. 'But it wasn't long before we realized that their interminable meetings weren't actually meant to help us at all, but were rather just designed to promote the ideology of the government.' Many southern women are still disinclined to trust government promises.

Some progress has been made, however. For the first time there are two women ministers in the cabinet, and an officer for women's affairs. Rural women can now participate in their local councils, and they also have the right to hold land. This means that girl children are now no longer thought to be a curse – because they bring a share of land into a family they are seen as an asset.

All the same, in a country as impoverished as Ethiopia there is a limit to what any government can hope to achieve to improve domestic life. 'Many of the women are prevented from participating in these new opportunities just because they have so much household work,' says Hammond. 'For them these new opportunities simply mean additional labour when they're already so hard-worked.'

The day when the women of Ethiopia can expect serious help with household tasks from the menfolk still seems to be a long way off. Until that time, whilst their battle may be won the war is still far from over.

'We achieved a lot during the conflict – but there are still many problems,' admitted Roman. 'The housework is still there, women still have to fetch the water and the firewood and do all the cooking. So we must continue our struggle. Now the country is at peace we must work to change society and to achieve the true emancipation of women.' ■

Caroline Swinburne is a freelance writer who lives in London.

Guinea-Bissau

THE soldier was wearing mirror sunglasses – always a worrying sign – and he informed me that I was trespassing inside the grounds of the presidential palace. I was in hot water.

'I'm sorry,' I gibbered. 'I didn't know.'

He took off his glasses. 'We keep meaning to get some proper signs,' he said. 'Don't worry about it.'

Things are changing fast in Guinea-Bissau. President Joao 'Nino' Vieira who has ruled since an army coup in 1980 is a popular man, and the lax presidential security stems from his confidence. He has set the country on course for multiparty elections this year, and the country could turn into a minor African success story.

In 1974 after independence from Portugal the ruling party, the Partido Africano da Independencia da Guine e Cabo Verde (PAIGC) committed itself to a high degree of state control. By 1985 this was beginning to change and six years later the first opposition party was legalized. Now there are many parties clamouring for attention. They grumble about the evolution of the political process (that is their job, after all), but on balance they are a lucky bunch. According to the local human-rights league, all political prisoners were released last year.

Despite its almost total lack of natural resources, Guinea-Bissau is blessed for two reasons. Firstly, a long liberation war against the Portuguese threw the complicated tribal mosaic together into an unusually unified nation. Language does not present a real problem since *Crioulo* (Creole) is widely spoken.

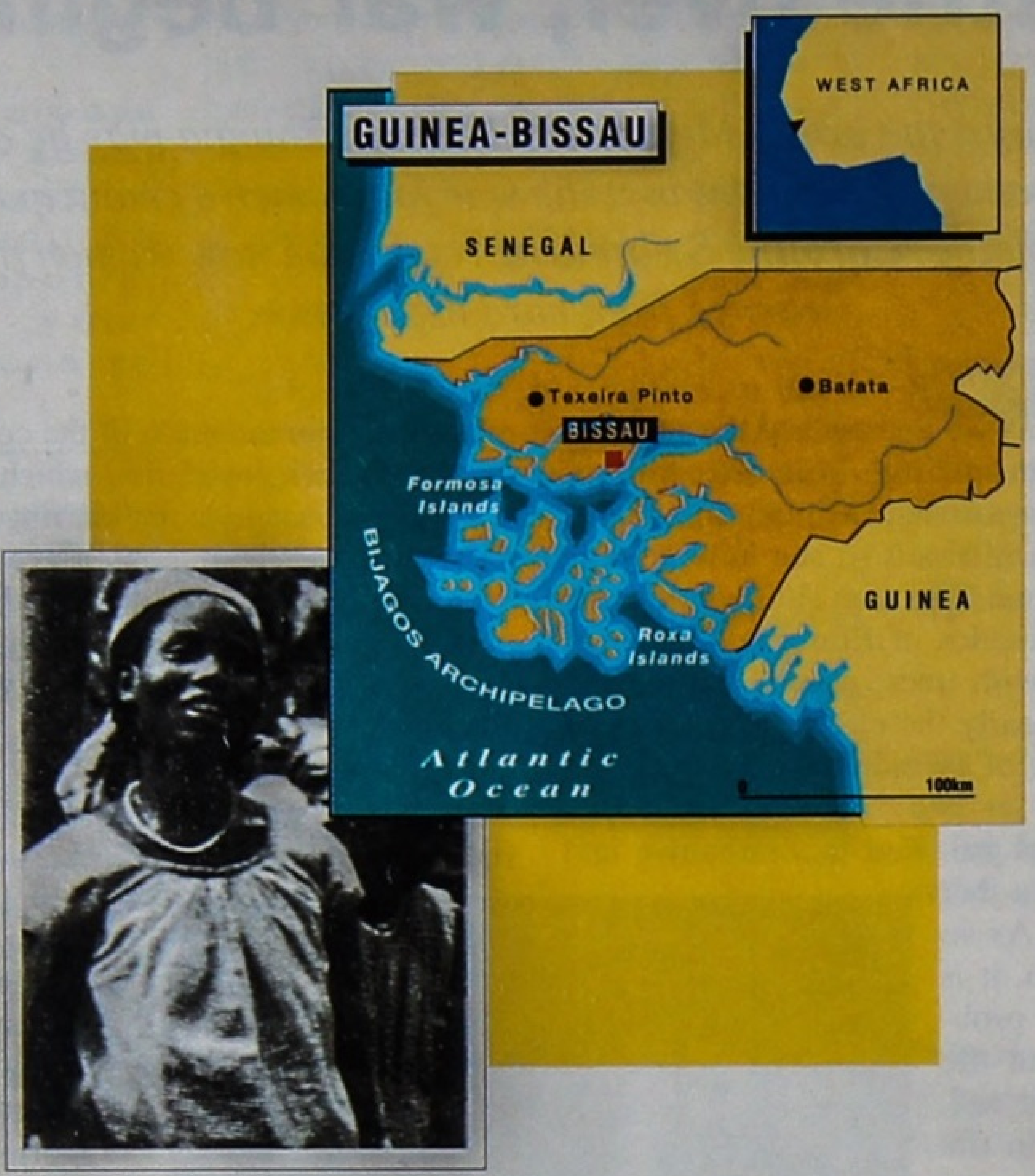
Secondly, Guinea-Bissau is still predominantly a nation of farmers. In 1986 the Government adopted a World Bank structural adjustment programme, and one of the most important results was a dramatic increase in food prices. Good roads were built into the near-impenetrable interior and measured food production has risen by about 300 per cent. Goods are available in the shops. The urban poor maintain strong links with agriculture and the population hasn't suffered as much as people feared from the price rises.

This is a country of steamy tropical abundance with some fine beaches thrown in. But despite the enormous shoals of fish swimming tantalizingly off the coast, the Government is unable to afford fish-processing plants. Foreign companies are being invited in to exploit this and other resources.

Opposition parties criticize PAIGC corruption and inefficiency, but if elected they say they too will want to have good relations with the World Bank. Foreign aid has a high profile in the capital, Bissau (witness the number of pink arms hanging out of the ubiquitous Landcruisers) and most public projects can't happen without it.

Vast problems confront this tiny African state, but some unexpected embers of hope are glowing quite brightly. ■

Nicholas Shaxson



BASIL DAVIDSON

AT A **glance**

Excellent ★★★★★
Good ★★★★
Fair ★★★
Poor ★★
Appalling ★

POLITICS
Centre-right, moving to multiparty democracy.
LEFT RIGHT
1984

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★★★
The emerging middle class is small but growing.
1984 ★★★★

LITERACY ★
Among the lowest in the world at 37% adult literacy.
1984 ★★

SELF-RELIANCE ★★
Still dependent on foreign aid.
1984 ★★

FREEDOM ★★★★
No political prisoners.
1984 ★★★★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★
There is a minister for women's affairs.
1984 ★★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★
43 years, one of the lowest in the world *(US 76 years)*.
1984 ★

Economy GNP per capita: US$180 *(US $22,240)*
Monetary unit Peso
Main exports Cashew nuts, groundnuts, fish, palm nuts and cotton.
Main imports Food, fuel and transport equipment.
People One million
Health Infant mortality 141 per 1,000 live births *(US 9 per 1,000).*
Culture Many ethnic groups: largest are Balanta, Mandinga, Fula and Manjacos.
Religion: Mainly traditional beliefs, but about one-third are Muslims and there is a small Roman Catholic minority.
Language: Crioulo, a mixture of Portuguese and African languages is the main spoken language. Portuguese is the official language.

***Sources:** Third World Guide 93/94; The State of the World's Children 1994; The Africa Review 1993/94; Oxfam West Africa Desk; West Africa magazine.*

Last profiled in November 1984.

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THE NI
NEW INTERNATIONALIST
st Timor
e silence and
he betrayal

SINCE 1975 the Indonesian dictatorship has successfully managed to keep East Timor off the front pages of the world's newspapers. This magazine and the Central TV documentary on 22nd February, both produced by John Pilger, break the silence and explore the shameful story of the betrayal of a courageous people. You can help to expose this story by ordering extra copies of the magazine at the special prices listed.

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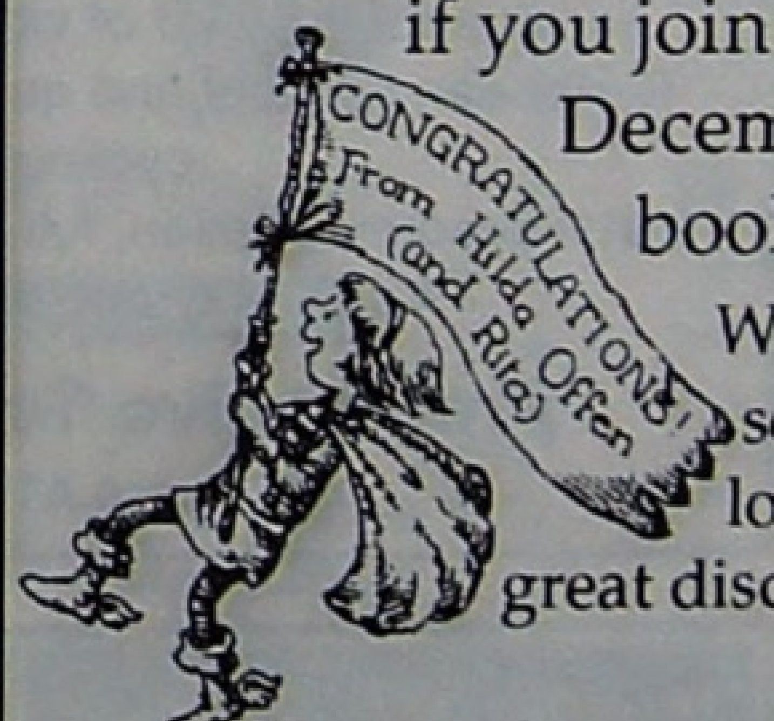

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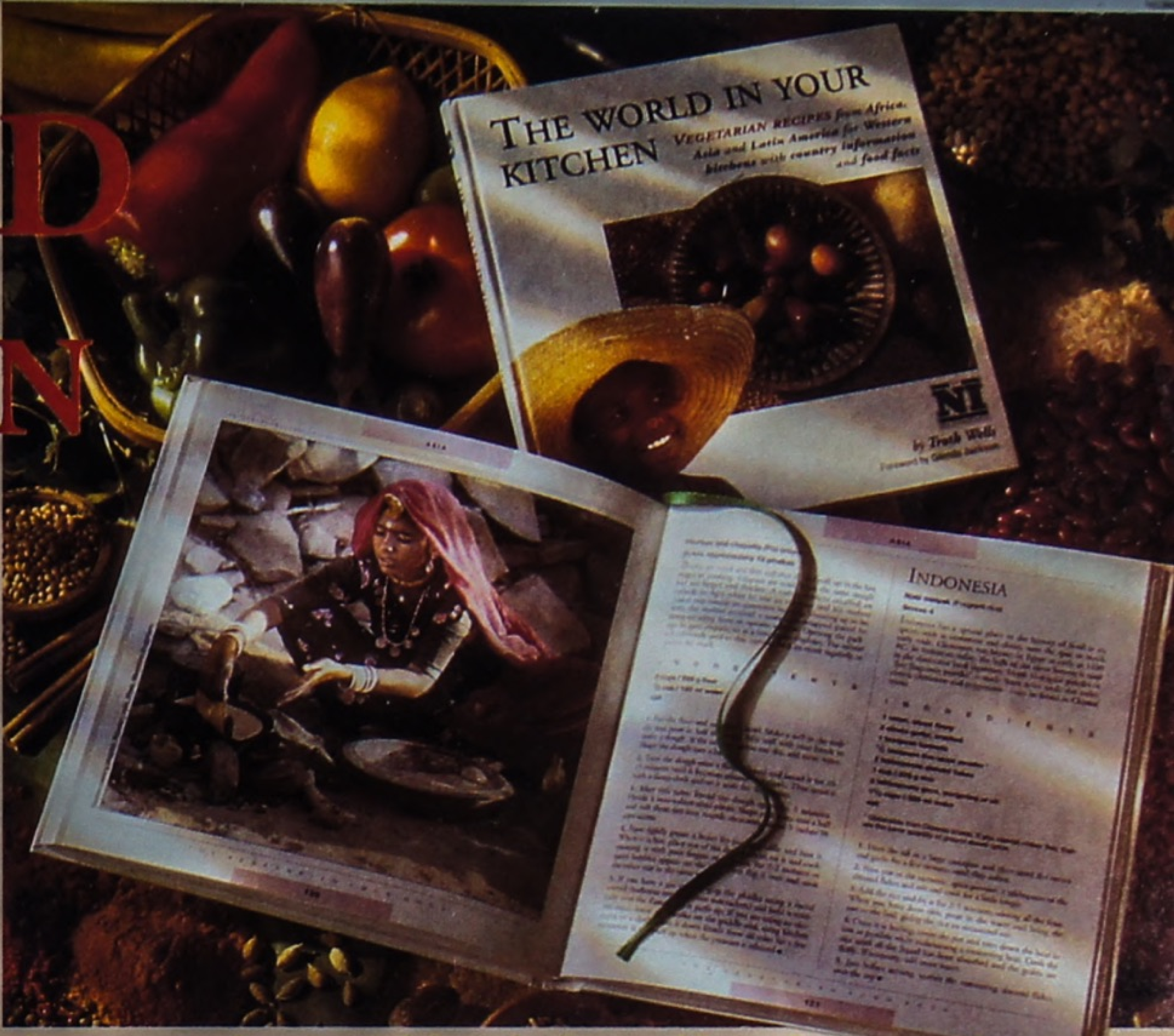
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Foreword by
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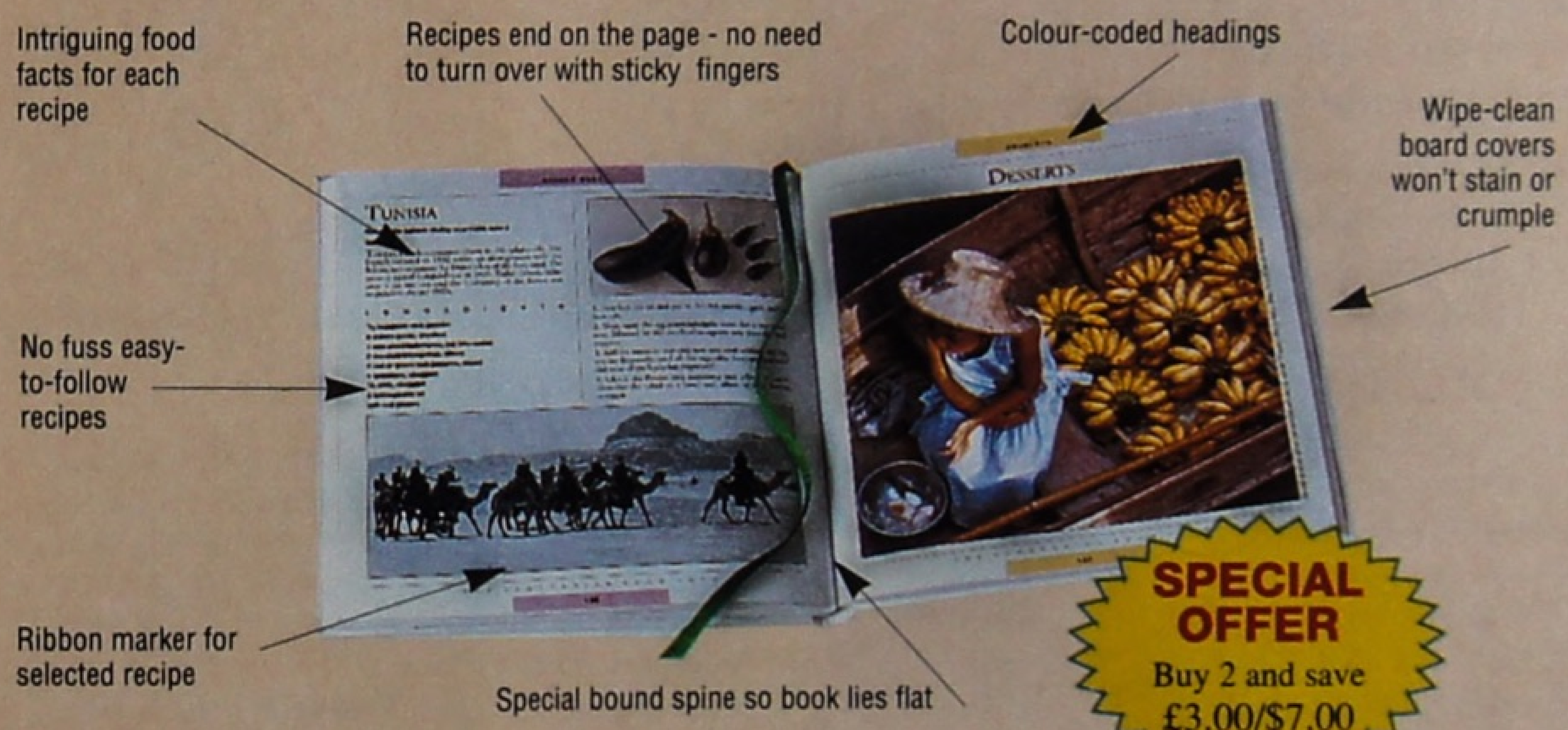
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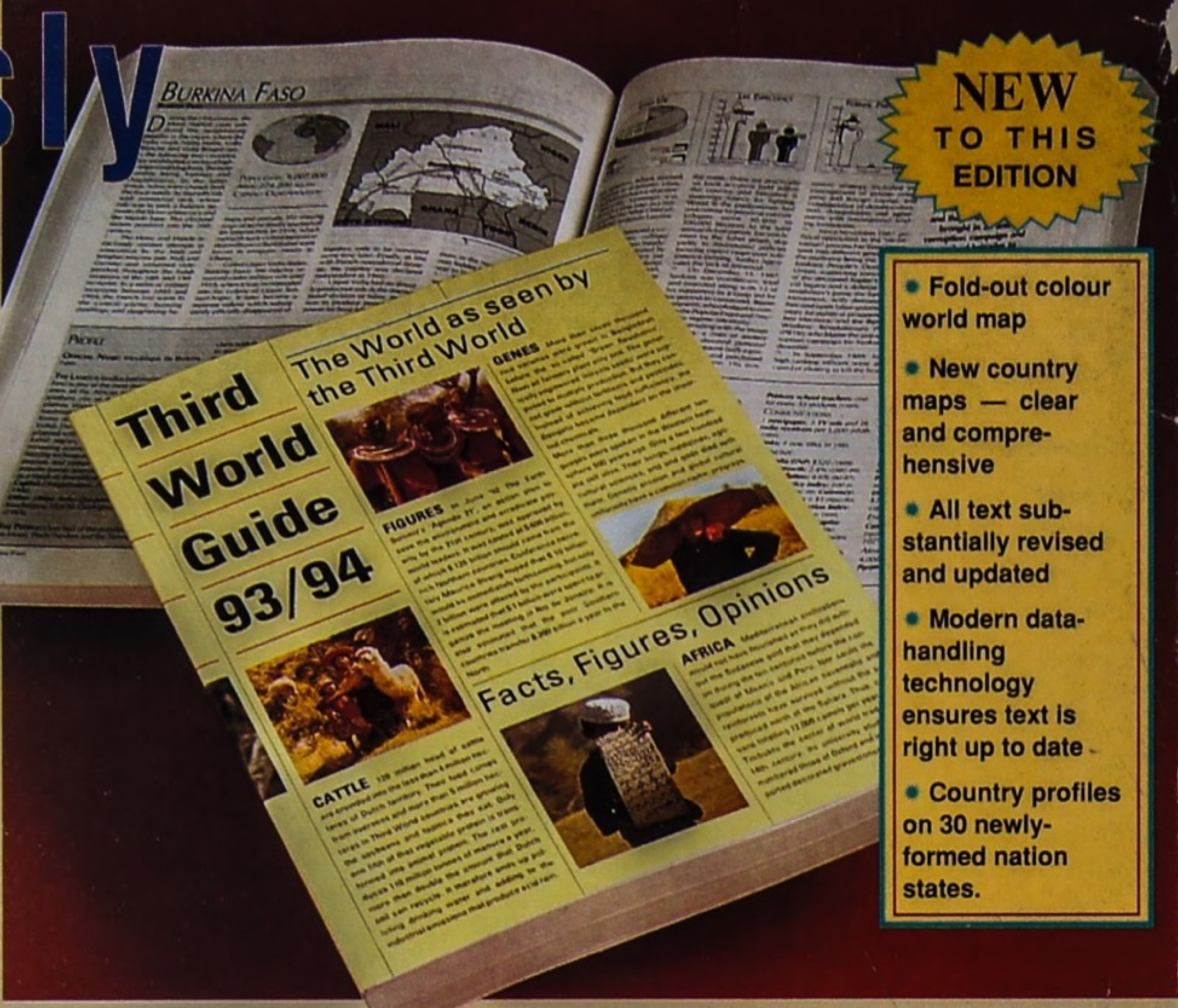

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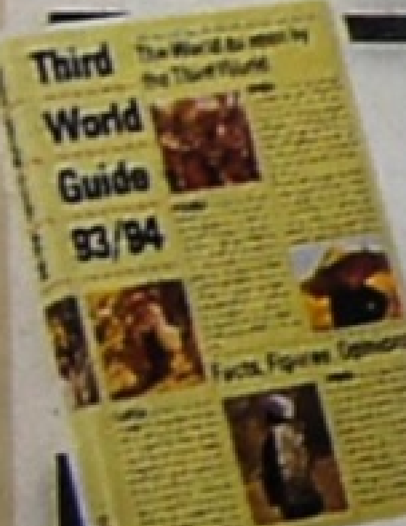

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